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# **Measuring populism in contemporary Poland**

**Pomiar populizmu  
we współczesnej Polsce**

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## Abstract

“Populism is on the rise in Europe” has become so popular an expression it hardly makes sense nowadays. This dissertation unpacks the concept of populism in the context of contemporary Polish party system and measures the phenomenon by looking at the official electoral programmes presented at the 2019 parliamentary election by the country’s main political parties and coalitions, namely: *Zjednoczona Prawica*<sup>1</sup>, *Koalicja Obywatelska*, *Koalicja Polska*, *Lewica* and *Konfederacja*.

The peculiarity of this study lies in its conceptualisation and the advantages it offers. Populism, and its Polish variation, is understood as a concept that can acquire three different shapes – ideology, thin-centred ideology, strategy of political communication – based on the frequency and the use of its characteristic elements. This conceptualisation helps to dissipate the vagueness surrounding the term and makes the phenomenon directly observable in real-life cases. Observation opens for the analysis of the electoral programmes that are investigated to assess the degree of populism in the main political parties and coalitions of today’s Poland. At the end of the analysis, parties and coalitions are arranged in a four-level index of Polish populism that allows to finally answer the research question: how much populist are the main political parties and coalitions in contemporary Poland?

In addition to the advantages offered by this conceptualisation, it should be acknowledged its capability of widening the perspective on populism in Poland. Indeed, this study does not only focus on the country’s political parties commonly labelled as populist but looks at the entire political scenario and examines parties and coalitions not often associated to populism. Given the nature and the purpose of electoral programmes, a certain level of populism can be detected in each of the parties and coalitions included in the research. Nonetheless, this study expected to find the highest levels of populism in the coalition currently leading the country, ZP, lower levels of populism in the others – with higher peaks in *Konfederacja* followed by KO and KP – and the lowest levels in *Lewica*.

The initial presumption was confirmed partially. As expected, ZP and *Lewica* were classified

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<sup>1</sup> *Zjednoczona Prawica* (United Right) was formed in 2014 as a parliamentary club in the Sejm. Initially, it included *Solidarna Polska* (United Poland), *Polska Razem* (Poland Together), *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) and *Stronnictwo Piast* (Piaś Faction). The coalition is in power since 2015 parliamentary election. Its formation has changed throughout time, but its leadership has always been in PiS’ hands. The current member of the coalition are PiS, *Porozumienie* (Agreement) and *Solidarna Polska* (Solidary Poland).

respectively as the most and the least populist coalitions according to the analysis of their 2019 electoral programmes, while the remaining three were classified as populist. Unexpectedly, covering all characteristic elements of Polish populism but one and mostly in a strongly populist manner, the second most populist party was KP. As for KO and *Konfederacja*, the former covered in its programme more characteristic elements than the latter, whose tone and attitude were, however, more populist than those used by KO. The high levels of populism detected in today's Poland's party system are in line with the current global populist drift. In the Polish case, the shift to populism of parties and coalitions generally not understood as populist can be explained by their necessity of adapting to the changing political scenario to stay competitive. Therefore, populism is used as a means of political survival.

**Keywords**

Poland – populism – political party –parliamentary election – electoral programme



## INTRODUCTION

“Populism is on the rise in Europe” has become so popular an expression it hardly makes sense nowadays. Countries like Poland, Hungary and Italy are often used as examples to support such statement because of tendencies developing in their political scenarios and the discourses of their parties’ leaders. This dissertation focuses on populism and frames it in the Polish context. The goal is to observe and measure the phenomenon in the country’s party system aiming at answering the following research question: how much populist are the main political parties and coalitions in contemporary Poland?

To answer the research question, it is necessary to define and understand populism in the Polish context and to develop a strategy that allows to measure the phenomenon. Therefore, the first chapter offers this work’s conceptualisation of populism, a vague notion that holds no single standard definition in academia. Populism is understood as a concept that can acquire three different shapes – ideology, thin-centred ideology, strategy of political communication – based on the frequency and the use of its characteristic elements. Populism’s characteristic elements are developed through the analysis of previous literature and are the key to understand, observe and measure the phenomenon in real-life cases. A historical excursus on Poland and the development of its party system since 1989 is offered in the third chapter along with a recap of the country’s parliamentary elections’ results since the 90s. This chapter also provides an overview on concrete examples of populism in Poland showing that the phenomenon is not new in the country and it defines Polish populism and its characteristic elements. In its third chapter, this dissertation illustrates the research methodology. It presents the units of analysis and the primary sources selected for the study. It describes the units of meaning and the categories and explains the procedure adopted to code the units of meaning, assign them in the right category and assess their value. The fourth chapter presents the findings of this study. It analyses each political party and coalition individually, explaining their results with the support of examples taken directly from the textual materials investigated. The chapter includes a comment on one of the characteristic elements that required separate analysis. At the end of the analysis, the index of populism is introduced to provide a visual representation of the general findings. Ultimately, after answering the research question, the fifth chapter discusses the general findings and the key categories of populism and Polish populism seeking to elaborate on the meaning of the analysis’ results.

This study focuses on the entire party system of the country and thus considers the relation to populism of each political party and coalition that reached the threshold in the 2019 parliamentary election by looking at their electoral programmes. Because of their nature and purpose, a certain level of populism can be detected in all the electoral programmes included in the research; however, the goal is to measure the levels of populism of each political party and coalition. According to the initial presumption, this study expects to find the highest levels of populism in ZP<sup>2</sup>, the PiS-led coalition currently ruling the country, and lower levels of populism in the others – with higher peaks in *Konfederacja* followed by KO and KP – and the lowest levels in *Lewica*.

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<sup>2</sup> *Zjednoczona Prawica* (hereinafter *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, *PiS*) was formed in 2014 as a parliamentary club in the Sejm. Initially, it included *Solidarna Polska* (United Poland), *Polska Razem* (Poland Together), *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) and *Stronnictwo Piast* (Piast Faction). The coalition is in power since 2015 parliamentary election. Its formation has changed throughout time, but its leadership has always been in PiS' hands. The current member of the coalition are PiS, *Porozumienie* (Agreement) and *Solidarna Polska* (Solidary Poland). More information about the coalition can be found in chapter 2, paragraph 5.

## **1. CONCEPTUALISATION**

This chapter explains how populism is understood in this dissertation by building up a conceptualisation that can be applied to the Polish case to observe the phenomenon in today's real-life examples. The chapter opens illustrating some premises and sketching a historical excursus of how the concept developed through time in three consecutive waves. It describes the limitations encountered and the solutions adopted. Later, a series of questions are answered to identify the characteristic elements of populism. This finally leads to the conceptualisation which claims that, based on the used and frequency of its characteristic elements, populism can acquire different shapes, and thus, can be conceived as an ideology, a thin-centred ideology or a strategy of political communication.

### **PREMISES**

Before starting to elaborate on the meaning of populism, a few points should be clarified. First, all academic works and scholars' analyses mentioned, including this dissertation's conceptualisation, refer to democratic contexts in Europe. This information will not be repeated every time, but it will be specified if an observation does not refer to such context. Secondly, considering the goal of the project, the Central and Eastern European and Polish contexts will be investigated separately. Ultimately, Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave distinguished three consecutive waves of populism – agrarian, Latin American and right-wing. As observed by J. B. Allcock, the term first appeared at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century concerning "radical groups or movements centred in the American mid-West" – the leftist agrarian People's Party, whose members defined themselves populists. (Allcock, 1971: 372) At the same time, the term was used to describe an "early utopian socialist movement among Russian intellectuals" who looked at the people – "mass of the peasants" – as the trigger for political revolution in opposition to the tsarist tradition. The members of this movement called themselves *narodnik* – the Russian word for "people" or "nation" – later translated into English with the word "populist". (Allcock, 1971: 372) During its second wave in the 1940s and 1950s, populism developed in Latin America and was associated with authoritarian regimes and leftist parties. Given the aim of this project, it was decided not to analyse the second waves of populism. Discussing Latin American populism does not bring more clarity in the debate on the conceptualisation of the term and most certainly raises more questions than answers. In the 1970s, populism reached Europe and emerged along with

right-wing, authoritarian tendencies during the third wave. Nevertheless, Mudde claims that "Even in post-war Europe there have been various populist phenomena" and lists several examples of populism in the immediate Second World War aftermath. (Mudde, 2004: 548) Despite the uncertainty and discordance between the scholars' assertions, this concise overview illustrates the central role assigned to the people conceived as a social group opposing to the long-established leading group. From its first documented appearances – US People's Party and Russian *Narodnichestvo* – the term populism was used by the members of the groups as self-description and was linked to the masses, the people. As a glance at the etymology of the term explains, the origins of the word populism are rooted in the Latin word *populus* which means people, or more precisely, the people – and the people are the key to the definition of populism.

## LIMITATIONS

Dwelling on the difficulties of approaching the concept of populism, three major issues have been identified:

**1. Vagueness.** The growing popularity of the term is accompanied by the considerable vagueness that still surrounds it. The debate on conceptualisation started at the Conference on Populism held in May 1967, when intellectuals were summoned "to see" – as Professor Leonard Schapiro stated in his speech – "whether there is such a thing as 'populism'". (Schapiro, 1967: 2) However, the Conference was unfruitful, and its goal too ambitious. Controversies arose among scholars who found themselves in disagreement and could not conclude on a standard definition of populism. At last, the term remained a vast, vague concept devoid of universal conceptualisation. To address this issue, this dissertation will forge its interpretation of the concept focusing on the single components of populism that almost all experts of the field identified in their works.

**2. Misunderstandings.** A second difficulty is the common misunderstanding of the term often confused with other concepts – namely: demagogy or opportunism. By referring to Cas Mudde's work, this dissertation ensures that populism is not misunderstood mixed up with other concepts. Mudde distinguishes populism from demagogy by describing the latter as "the politics of the Stammtisch" referring to a political discourse that targets the "guts feelings of the people" and thus is simplistic and emotional. (Mudde, 2004: 542) He also differentiates populism from opportunism as this last indicates those policies aiming at "(quickly) pleasing the people/voters – and so 'buying' their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the 'best option.'" (Mudde, 2004: 542)

**3. Objectivity.** The third difficulty is the struggle for objectivity. Populism is often perceived as bad, and negative connotations have been attached to it through time, especially during the third wave, when populism was linked to right-wing parties, authoritarian systems or nationalist tendencies. Moreover, populism is often mistakenly confused with demagoguery and opportunism, and the negative overtones implied by these notions are transferred to it. In its career, populism was filled with inappropriate negative associations. Considering such tendencies, this work provides a conceptualisation free of negative attitudes, and thus, Jagers and Walgrave's definition offers essential help to approach the phenomenon objectively.

## **THIS THESIS' CONCEPTUALISATION**

### **1. What is populism?**

The academic career of the concept began in the 1950s following the publication of Edward A. Shils' article. He elaborates on populism in the realm of American politics and describes it as an anti-elitist trend, whose essence is "the belief that the people are not just the equal of their rulers; they are actually better than their rulers", and that can endanger democracy and the rule of law while calling for social equality. (Shils, 1954: 103) For the first time, populism is framed as an ideological phenomenon and Shils' conceptualisation of populism as an ideology paved the way for the subsequent conceptualisation attempts. (Allcock, 1971: 372) However, when compared to other "-isms", populism is a rather weak ideology and had "hardly received intellectual recognition." (Akkerman, 2003: 150) As Tjitske Akkerman states: "If we define ideology as a total, closed and cohesive view of human beings in society, it would be indeed difficult to claim that populism is a fully-fledged ideology." (Akkerman, 2003: 150) Then, taking a cue from Michael Freeden's 1996 work, he equals populism to conservatism in terms of ideology and argues that populists, similarly to conservatives, "do not run for arguments and ideas." (Akkerman, 2003: 150; Freeden, 1996: 318) This lack of arguments and ideas makes of populism an imperfect, incomplete ideology. However, Akkerman continues drawing on Margaret Canovan and Paul Taggart's observations and concludes including populism among the "-ism concepts" as an ideology. According to him, Canovan, Taggart and other scholars' studies "provide a convincing account of the core ideas of populism." (Akkerman, 2003: 151) Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell also conceptualise populism as an ideology and define it: "an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and

dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice." (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008: 3) In their work, the authors consider Hans-Georg Betz and Carol Johnson's elaborations about ideology and the questions they believe must be answered by a concept for it be elevated at the level of full ideology. These questions are: "what went wrong; who is to blame; and what is to be done to reverse the situation." (Betz and Johnson, 2004: 323) Albertazzi and McDonnell argue that "like all ideologies, populism proposes an analysis designed to respond to a number of essential questions: (...)" including those formulated by Betz and Johnson and they provide these answers and analysis to support their view of populism as an ideology. (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008:4-5) Mudde offers the following definition of populism: "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt élite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." (Mudde, 2004: 542-543) He conceptualises populism as an ideology but also agrees on Freedén's understanding of populism as a "thin-centred ideology" that can thus be combined with other ideologies. (Mudde, 2004: 544) Later, in 2017, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser adopt in their work the definition of populism previously provided by Mudde. However, they enrich it with Freedén's notion and conceptualise populism as a thin-centred ideology. For the purpose of clarity, Freedén's notion of thin-centred ideology and Mudde's following interpretation are further developed. In his article, Freedén argues that "a thin-centred ideology is one that arbitrarily severs itself from wider ideational contexts, by the deliberate removal and replacement of concepts" meaning that a thin-centred ideology is more limited in scope and ambitions and has a "structural inability to offer complex range of arguments." (Freedén, 1998: 750) This explains Mudde and Kaltwasser's choice of phrasing their conceptualisation of populism using the notion of "thin-centred ideology" to describe the limits of populism as a complete ideology.

Nevertheless, other scholars approached the concept from a different perspective and framed populism as a strategy of political communication, these approaches offer several opportunities, particularly from an empirical point of view. Jagers and Walgrave's conceptualisation of populism revolutionises the approach to the term by defining it "primarily as a specific political communication style (...) essentially displaying proximity of the people, while at the same time taking an anti-establishment stance and stressing the (ideal) homogeneity of the people by

excluding specific population segments." (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 319) In their conceptualisation, the scholars maintain the "common denominators" of populism: the people characterised by their ideal homogeneity, the anti-elite feeling, and an exclusion strategy to which only very specific categories are subject. (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 322) They continue explaining that both a thin or a thick definition can be applied to populism; the former if only the first denominator is present, the latter if all three elements are present. Jagers and Walgrave conclude opting for: "a thin definition of populism considering it as a political communication style of political actors that refers to the people" and they claim that populism is "a communication frame that appeals to and identifies with the people, and pretends to speak in their name." (Jagers and Walgrave, 2006: 322) According to the authors, the thin definition is to be preferred because it allows to overcome the negative connotations attached to the term, it still recognises the people as "the essential core of populism" and "offers important analytical advantages." (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 322-23)

Many authors took a cue from Jagers and Walgrave, among them, the most relevant are Kurt Weyland and of Hanspeter Kriesi. Weyland looks at the proximity to the people and the lack of institutionalised and formal mediation and defines of populism as "a political strategy through which a personalist leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganised followers." (Weyland, 2013: 149) In his conceptualisation, Weyland adheres to Jagers and Walgrave's approach and seizes the advantages this perspective offers when attempting to recognise populism in practical cases. Kriesi's remarks are as well built on Jagers and Walgrave's interpretation which he uses to clarify the "distinction between populist ideology and populist communication strategies" by claiming that "populist ideology manifests itself in the political communication strategies of populist leader." (Kriesi, 2014: 363-4) Interestingly, Kriesi combines both aspects of populism, as an ideology and as a political communication strategy, and states that "as an expression of the populist ideology, populist communication strategies may be used to identify the populist ideology empirically." (Kriesi, 2014: 364) In this regard, populism can be seen as an end (when conceived as ideology) or as a means (when conceived as political communication strategy) serving the goal of the ideology by being its means of expression. Lastly, as Jagers and Walgrave claim, among the advantages of this understanding, the most important is that conceptualising

populism as a political communication strategy allows to identify it in real life by making populism's defining elements directly observable in the populist discourse.

This dissertation argues that populism can acquire three different shapes and can be conceived as an ideology *per sé*, when it is used as the essential creed of a political party; as a thin-centred ideology, when it is one of the ideologies of a political party but is blended with other (“thicker”) ideologies; or as a strategy of political communication, when it is used as a discourse or a framework for the core message a political party is willing to convey.

In most studies on populism, it is possible to notice some recurring, characteristic elements that can as well be detected in real-life cases. Such elements are the key of this work's conceptualisation as the shapes populism can take are determined by the number of characteristic elements used and by the way they are treated. In fact, what permits to conceive populism as a concept that can acquire different shapes is the versatility of the use of its characteristic elements. The following section looks at them more closely and explains the way populism's defining features are understood in this work.

## **2. What are the two antagonist groups of the society?**

One of the recurring elements of most definitions of populism is the differentiation between two groups of the society and their inherent antagonism. Although, all scholars agree on calling one of the groups "the people", there are different understandings of their nemesis. Nonetheless, debates also rose due to different interpretations of the people.

**Who are the people?** Academic definitions of populism in the first wave conceive it as an anti-elite movement whose members come from the lower and medium-low strata of the society, generally peasants. (Shils, Allcock) This interpretation based on social classes persisted through time, and the people were associated with low and middle strata. However, other scholars refuse the class interpretation and argue that "the term is nothing more than a rhetorical tool that does not truly refer to any existing group of people." (Mudde, 2004: 545) In this regard, it is worth recalling MacRae's intervention at the Conference of Populism when he presents the "idealisation of a Volk" as the number one characteristic of populist movements. (MacRae, 1967: 130) Taggart's remarks on the people should also be considered, particularly when he introduces the concept of "the heartland" to describe "an idealised conception of the community they [the populists] serve" and identify with" and that is used by the populists to "construct the 'people' as



the object of their politics." (Taggart, 2004: 274) Therefore, as Mudde notes, according to Taggart, the populist propaganda talks about the people as "a mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population" to be understood as Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities." (Mudde, 2004: 546; Anderson, 1983) In her definition of populism as "an appeal to 'the people' against both the established structure of power and dominant ideas and values of the society," Canovan thoroughly focuses on the people and their characteristics. (Canovan, 1999: 3) She pictures them as an "ordinary" and "normally unpolitical" mass that can be mobilised politically to fight against established centres of power threatening the people's unity and ideals. (Canovan, 1999: 5-6) Moreover, Canovan describes the people as "united" and stresses that their unity is threatened by those attempting to divide the people. (Canovan, 1999: 5) Similarly, Taggart describes the people as a "unified population" served by the populists and that lives in a "territory of the imagination" – the heartland. (Taggart, Populism, 2000: 95; Taggart, 2004: 274) Jagers and Walgrave also describe the idealised people as "a monolithic group without internal differences," this feature is mentioned by many other scholars – Canovan, Mudde, Albertazzi and McDonnell – and can simply be summarised by the word homogenous. More recently, Jan-Werner Müller also addresses the issue by claiming that populists refer to the people as "the real people" or "the silent majority." (Müller, 2018: 3) The first interpretation underlines that the people are a symbolic social construct created by the populists and that, as Müller explains, "the populist decides who the real people are." (Müller, 2018: 4) Whereas, equalling the real people to the silent majority, or better to a "silenced majority," stresses the populist belief of the people being unjustly devoid of their voices and powers. (Müller, 2018: 5) Lastly, Albertazzi and McDonnell widely analyse this social group and explain that, according to the populists' vision, "the people are one and are inherently 'good'" and sovereign and recognise the outstanding value of "the people's culture and way of life." (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008: 6)

This work understands "the people" as an idealised imagined community constructed by the populist leaders as a tool for their political purposes. Populist leaders picture the people to be homogenous, united, good, pure, virtuous, ordinary, apolitical and characterised by anti-establishment sentiments. The people are also seen as sovereign in the society and having their rights restricted, their voice ignored, and their needs neglected. Shortly, their essence, values and ideals are threatened. Such denial of general will in a democracy leads to the mobilisation of the people that are then encouraged to enter the political field guided by a charismatic leader.

**Who is the people's adversary?** Shils and Allcock's works prove that, since the beginning, populism juxtaposes the people to the élite and is framed as an anti-elitist movement reiterating the initial class interpretation of the phenomenon. The anti-elitist sentiment of populism is common to the studies of many authors showing that, in the tale of populism, the élite is the villain. MacRae states "as the specific people is naturally good; therefore, to explain why things are not good, there must be devils." (MacRae, 1967:130) Following his reasoning and combining it to his statement on anti-elitism, it emerges that populism juxtaposes the good people to the evil élite. (MacRae, 1967:130) The interpretation of the people's enemy enters the political dimension when Canovan writes that the people are mobilised against "the established structures of power and the dominant values and idea of the society." (Canovan, 1999: 3) The established structures of power are understood as those who are in power, and so represent the ruling class, the official authorities and any cadres attempting at dividing the people. Canovan also finds an enemy of the people in the dominant ideas and values of the society, these understood as the social pressure given by the centres of power in the society that hamper the people's unity. Similarly to Canovan, John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira conceive the people's adversary as "the powerful" and imply the idea of a ruling class or an élite who owns the power and acts to realise their own interests while ignoring the people's needs and trying to restrict them. (Judis and Teixeira, 2002) Taggart dwells more on the characterisation of the people and populists and is rather vague when it comes to the people's antagonist. However, he is of a similar opinion of Canovan's and, sticking to the political dimension, claims that "populism is hostile to representative politics" and the institutions that have come from it with modernity. (Taggart, 2004: 274) In his conceptualisation, Mudde clearly states that the group of the society opposed to the good people is the "corrupt élite." (Mudde, 2004: 543) Two things can be observed here; first, Mudde adheres to the understanding of populism as anti-elitist and stresses such tendency in his conceptualisation. Second, the adjective "corrupt" helps to overcome one of populism's shortcomings: the inherent contradiction of an elite-led movement or party aiming at destroying an elitist system. This way, Mudde does not oppose to the people the whole élite, but only its corrupt members, who can be identified by populist leaders only. Finally, in their conceptualisation, Albertazzi and McDonnell remain vague on the identity of the people's adversary and opt for the catch-all term "others" but enrich it with the pejorative adjective "dangerous" to generalise on the various threats that may endanger the people. (Albertazzi and

McDonnell, 2008: 3) The notion of danger is vague and subjective, and consequently, the people's antagonist remains an unclear group of the society in Albertazzi and McDonnell's work.

This dissertation prefers to use the word antagonist: as an umbrella term that includes Judis and Texeira's "powerful," Taggart's "politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats, 'boffins'", Mudde's "corrupt elite", Albertazzi and McDonnell's "dangerous others" and also long-established system's cadres. Like the people, the antagonist is also constructed by the populists and serves their political interest. Thus, it changes according to the populists' necessities. However, three defining features of the antagonist can be observed: first, it is constructed by the populists as the group of the society to be opposed to the people; second, this group owns the power and has long been established, so it can correspond to the ruling class, leading élite, official authorities; third, the antagonists threatens the people, their unity and identity and hamper populism's values and aims.

### **3. Who are the populist leaders?**

Another group should be considered: the populist leaders. This work has already talked about the populist leaders and presented them as the promoters of populism, the political actors communicating the populist ideology and the architects of the idealised imagined community (the people) and its antagonist, both used in the populist propaganda. Some more considerations are worth to be further explored: first, the idea of not only unity but also correspondence between the populist leaders and the people as noted by Taggart, Albertazzi and McDonnell and many others. Second, the consequent role and responsibility of these leaders in representing the people and leading them.

Regarding the first remark, Taggart writes that populists "tend to identify themselves with a 'heartland' that represents an idealised conception of the community they serve" and that populism is about the glorification of "the ordinariness of its constituents and the extraordinariness of their leaders" (Taggart, 2004: 274; Taggart, 2000: 102). While Albertazzi and McDonnell observe that "They 'incarnate' the people's culture, articulate the will of the people, 'say what people are thinking', can see through the machinations of the elites and have the vision to provide simple, understandable solutions to the problems portrayed by the elites as complex and intractable" all of this while at the same time remaining "in all other ways 'one of the people' and, hence, one 'with the people.'" (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008: 7) Adding on

the second remark about the ability of populists to understand and support the people, Müller states that "they also claim that they and they alone represent what populists often call 'the real people' or 'the silent majority'" and consequently "they denounce all other contenders for power as fundamentally illegitimate." (Müller, 2018: 4) In these claims, the scholars stress the insistence and the ambition of populist leaders when they proclaim themselves as the only ones who can truly speak in the name of their people and fight for their interests because no one else but them can properly and fully understand every aspect of the people's lives. Moreover, in their visions, populist leaders depict themselves as ordinary heroes who can free the people and protect them from their evil antagonists. Likewise, Canovan considers the figure of populist leaders and their role in representing the people by giving them a voice and writes that populists "see themselves as true democrats, voicing popular grievances and opinions systematically ignored by governments, mainstream parties and media." (Canovan, 1999: 2) She identifies "three different senses that figure in populist discourse" which in practice are often combined. (Canovan, 1999: 5) Among these elements, she distinguishes the mood characterising populism that has the "revivalist flavour of a movement, powered by the enthusiasm that draws normally unpolitical people into the political arena." (Canovan, 1999: 6) In this fragment, Canovan describes another characteristic worthy of consideration: the charismatic populist leaders' ability to mobilise the people politically by building on their emotional spur. In their overview on populist leaders, Jagers and Walgrave emphasise populism's "proximity to the people" and observe that, when populists refer to the people, they also justify their actions "by appealing to and identifying with the people" and conclude that populism "is a communication frame that appeals to and identifies with the people, and pretends to speak in their name." (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 319; 322) These considerations are also shared by Mudde who says that populist leaders claim to "speak in the name of the 'oppressed people,' and they want to emancipate them by making them aware of their oppression." (Mudde, 2004: 545-6) Furthermore, he argues that the populist leaders' principal characteristics are being strong and charismatic leaders and performing a direct and simplistic communication that brings them closer to the people and defines their success. Another key trait of populist leaders is presenting themselves in clear contrast to the previous establishment and as outsiders of the system. In this regard, Peter Učeň dwells on the aversion of populist challengers "against all previous configurations of the ruling elite" and recognises the most distinctive feature of populist parties

in the "Dominance of anti-establishment posture over ideology in political projects." (Učeň, 2007: 54) The antagonism between new and old parties and their leaders is also stressed by Kriesi, who claims that newness allows a political party to enter the party system as the fighter of the old, corrupt political regime in a typically populist fashion. However, he adds that in many cases, the innovation brought by the so-called new parties is "typically reduced to a new style of communication and to some – rather symbolic – institutional reforms." (Kriesi, 2014: 375)

Populist leaders are here understood as promoters of populism who construct an idealised imagined community – the people – to which they claim not only to belong but also to better understand, represent and lead and that serves their political goals. In the same way, populists also build a precise image of the people's antagonist, which also serves their goals of presenting themselves as "men of the people" and "strong leaders", and thus, as the only alternative to the people's evil antagonist. Concluding, as Canovan, Mudde and Jagers and Walgrave acknowledge, the secret of the populist leaders' success lies in their communication strategy and the style of their discourse. Through this they frame the clash between the people and the elite and between new and old parties in enthusiastic tones and address the people and their feelings in a direct, simple and emotional manner. As Kriesi stresses the communication style of populist leaders is a characteristic trait of the phenomenon and what makes them appear as the new, innovative and the alternative to the long-established system of power.

#### **4. What are the values of populism?**

Taggart argues for "a lack of core values" in populism which makes it dependant to whichever other ideology it is attached to, and thus, is "highly chameleonic." (Taggart, 2004: 275) He specifies that such lack of values is given by the fact that they are derived from the heartland, and there is a "variety of versions" of it. (Taggart, 2004: 274). Although Taggart's reasoning appears logic, it should be noted that this work has developed its understanding of Taggart's heartland, the antagonist, the populists and, above all, of populism. Therefore, it was possible to identify some recurring themes of populism that can be framed as values. As for values of populism, this dissertation refers to the principles on which populism is based on and the principles its supporters believe in and fight for under the guidance of populists.

**People's sovereignty, the general will and authentic representation.** The leading principle of populism is people's sovereignty which includes the respect of the people's general will, the

recognition of the people's common sense as a guideline for the rulers, and the notion of authentic representation of the people.

At the Conference on Populism, Professor MacRae claims in his statement that populist movements are statist meaning that "the state is justified in its interventions if these are to restore society to health" and that "society is more important and prior to, stronger than, embodies more values, than state." (MacRae, 1967: 130) His words refer to something close to popular sovereignty and let glimpse the pre-eminence of the society and the subordination of the state. Therefore, the relationship between the people (society) and their rulers (state) can be summarised as follows: "the state is the instrument of society." (MacRae, 1967: 130) The principle of the people's sovereignty is also described by Albertazzi and McDonnell when they discuss the people's features and indicate them as sovereign by explaining "Those who govern are morally obliged to do so in the interests of the people who must once more become 'masters in their own homes', in the widest sense of the term." (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008: 6) The authors' statement contributes to the concept of the governors as those in charge of acting in the interest of the governed (the people), and it elevates the latter as "sovrano in the house."

While describing the relationship between the people and their rulers, scholars often mention the people's general will and common sense. Both concepts are reviewed by Mudde, who says in his definition of populism that "politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" meaning that the people's voice must be heard and their interests, needs and desires must be seconded and fulfilled. In the same work, Mudde also discusses the common sense of the people and defines it "the consciousness of the people" and "the basis of all good (politics)." (Mudde, 2004: 547) Therefore, the common sense of the people must be recognised and followed by the ruling élite to achieve good governance.

Lastly, fair and true representation is another important aspect included in people's sovereignty. This aspect is stressed by Taggart when addresses populism as a feature of representative politics which is hostile to its institutions and claims that what populists seek is not "more representative government" but a "better government". (Taggart, 2004: 273) Similarly, Mudde argues that what both populist masses and populist élite support is "'true' representation" and they oppose "being represented by an 'alien' elite, whose policies do not reflect their own wishes and concerns." (Mudde, 2004: 560) Again, it emerges the populists' emphasis on presenting themselves as the only entitled to represent the people and their opposition to the people's antagonists who are too

distant from the people and their needs.

According to populism the good, virtuous and pure people are the dominant group of the society to which the state and the rulers merely serve as instruments; therefore, the people's general will and common sense are those that should be listened to and followed. To do so, people's sovereignty is a vital principle that must be promoted, recognised and guaranteed with authentic representation.

**A future like the past.** One last point should be made when discussing the values of populism as defined in this work. When Canovan elaborates on the populist mood, she states that there is "an extra ingredient [in populism that] can turn politics into a campaign to save the country or to bring a great renewal." (Canovan, 1999:6) This idea of renewal and bringing a change in the future is evident in the narrative of populism and worth of further investigation as it is not merely a renewal but has some distinct traits. This extra feature of populism emerges when considering the characterisation of the people against their antagonist, and it can be described as the will of building a future which resembles the past. Such past is imagined as good and virtuous like the people and is deeply connected to the pure and divine nature. This pure and natural past is also imagined as free from the corruption and evil that modernity and bureaucracy have brought in the world. MacRae describes this sentiment as "primitivism" meaning that "the future is to be an improved archaic past" and argues that "this could be seen as an improvement by an elimination, as a pruning process of the present – that is, by the nineteenth century – idea of revolution." (MacRae, 1967: 130) Nevertheless, including the idea of revolution in the concept of populism when discussing values and beliefs of such a thin-centred ideology is too strong an inference. As Mudde, taking a cue from Taggart, writes "populists are reformist rather than revolutionary (...)" (Mudde, 2004: 546) Taggart's concept of the heartland may as well help to clarify this sentiment towards a lost and better past. In his work, the scholar explains that the heartland is an ideal world "constructed retrospectively from the past – it is in essence a past-derived vision projected onto the present as that which has been lost." (Taggart, 2004: 271) Taggart continues stressing that in the past "there was a good life before the corruptions and distortions of the present" and blames the loss of such good life lived in the past on the advent of modernity. (Taggart, 2004: 274)

This work supports Mudde's view and refuses to consider populism a revolutionary ideology while conceives it as a reformist one whose promoters (populist leaders) present themselves as

those who can change the future. Lastly, this idea of bringing a change is accompanied by the belief that the future should be inspired by the natural life of an idealised past lost with the advent of modernity. Hence, the future can only be built under the lead of populists and must resemble a better version of this lost past.

## **5. What are the causes of populism?**

No phenomenon can be legitimately understood if its causes are not explored. The focus now shifts to the investigation of the underlying factors facilitating populism's emergence and development. It should be reminded that this section concentrates on the third wave of populism – right-wing populism – and explores the factors leading to the rise of populism in such contexts. Having this in mind, Canovan's remarks about the populist mood are a starting point. In her work, she writes that "populist politics is not ordinary, routine politics. It has the revivalist flavour of a movement," and she associates it with "the tendency for heightened emotions to be framed on a charismatic leader." (Canovan, 1999: 6) Here, it can be observed the mobilisation of the people under the guidance of a charismatic leader that politicises the people directly addressing their emotions. However, this can only partially explain the rise of populism and does not consider other facets. When presenting the five features of populism, Taggart claims that it is "a reaction to a sense of extreme crisis. Populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but comes as an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge" and continues explaining how populists are able to exploit such sense of crisis "to inject an urgency and an importance to their message." (Taggart, 2004: 275) Despite stressing again the role of the populists playing with the emotions of the people and directing them at their will, one more element can be found in Taggart's words: the concept of crisis. More precisely, the sense of crisis, not a tangible ongoing one, and the way populists manipulate such feeling. Mudde as well agrees with Canovan and Taggart when arguing for the vital role performed by populist leaders in the mobilisation of the people and claims that the people "generally have to be mobilised by a populist actor, rather than taking the initiative themselves." (Mudde, 2004: 548) However, contrary to Taggart, he believes the term crisis is improperly used as populism is activated only under "special circumstances: most notably, the combination of persisting political resentment, a (perceived) serious challenge to 'our way of life', and the presence of an attractive populist leader." (Mudde, 2004: 547) The centrality of populist leaders is also acknowledged by Albertazzi and McDonnell, who say "populists therefore invoke a sense of crisis and the idea that 'soon it will be too late'. However,



while they preach impending doom, they also offer salvation." (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2004: 5) In their claim, the authors merge all the elements thus far observed, which can be summarised as follows: populist leaders are creating a sense of crisis, which already exists in the society to a minor extent and is given by regular challenges, then they can exploit the people's emotions and urge them for a change. This way, populist leaders can mobilise the people politically and become the movement's leaders while promoting themselves as the true representatives of the people, the only who can rightfully guide and save them from the crisis and the current evil rulers and corrupt system. Nonetheless, there must be a predisposition of the people towards populism, something more than what Mudde called "reactiveness." (Mudde, 2004: 548) In this regard, one more work should be considered for its contribution to "underpinning the causes of populism" as Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin write. The scholars focus on national populism and "associate its resurgence with four long-term trends (...) namely: 1) distrust: alienation from 'liberal elites', including 'experts' and career politicians; 2) destruction: fears that 'traditional' identities are being undermined, especially by immigration; 3) deprivation: feelings of relative deprivation and status decline, associated with economic insecurities and inequalities; 4) de-alignment: the breakdown of identification with 'mainstream' political parties." (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2019) Although Eatwell and Goodwin focus on a specific type of populism, their observations can be extended to the whole category of populism as intended in this work and applied to the people's attitude. The four trends can be reconducted to the people as conceptualised in this work, and thus, become the pre-conditions that populists exploit to mobilise them.

To wrap up, populism generally emerges when there are the four conditions – distrust, destruction, deprivation, de-alignment – describing the attitude of the people that make them prone to react to populist leaders' mobilisation when socio, political or economic circumstances are favourable because of the existing challenges. Populist leaders can then succeed in their appeal to the people addressing their emotions to create a stronger sense of crisis and depicting themselves as the only valid alternative for the people.

## **HOW IS POPULISM UNDERSTOOD IN THIS THESIS?**

This dissertation builds its conceptualisation around the characteristics elements that distinguish populism:

1. the society's division into two opposite and antagonist groups;
2. the central role of the people depicted as good, homogenous, sovereign and threatened by the antagonist;
3. the antagonist threatening the people and belonging to the long-established, corrupt elite or centres of power;
4. the appeal to the people a) instilling a sense of insecurity by outlining the dangers coming from the antagonist and its threats, and thus, b) urging them to act before it is too late;
5. the populist leaders presenting themselves as one with the people and the only alternative to the antagonist - who can truly represent the people, protect their values and rights and fulfill their aim;
6. the anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiment often combined with a-political claims;
7. the belief that sovereignty belongs to the people;
8. the promotion of the people's general will and common sense to give them a voice;
9. the importance of authentic representation;
10. the aversion to modernity corrupting natural, pure and traditional old lifestyle and the need to bring a change in the future so that it resembles a better version of the ideal past;
11. simple and direct communication style addressing the people's emotions.

and it argues that populism is a concept whose shape varies according to the number of characteristic elements that can be detected and according to the way these elements are employed. Therefore, populism can be:

- 1) an *ideology per sé*, when used as the essential creed of a political party. This happens when all the characteristic elements of populism are present, clearly identifiable, repeated multiple times and emphasised as the core belief of the party while no other ideologies prevail.
- 2) a *thin-centred ideology*, when used as one of the ideologies of a political party but is blended with other ("thicker") ideologies. This happens when most of populism's characteristic elements are present and are not at the centre of the party's belief, but they are sub-ordinated to other concepts and values belonging to the other ideologies populism is combined with.
- 3) a *strategy of political communication*, when used as a discourse or as a framework for the core message a political party is willing to convey. This happens when only a few of populism's characteristic elements are present, when they are not central to the party's core belief but mainly used to attract voters.

It is worth noting that very rarely a party uses populism as its one and only ideology while, in a higher number of cases, it appears as a thin-centred ideology combined with others. Nevertheless, most frequently, populism appears as a strategy of political communication and, as such, it can be observed in most parties' tactics especially during their campaigns.

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This chapter provides a historical excursus of the Polish political scenario in which populism has emerged. It is divided into two main sections: the first elaborates on the Polish political system and the development of the country's party system and illustrates the parliamentary elections' results since 1991 mainly focusing on those held in 2015 and 2019. The second part describes the rise of populism within the Polish borders with the support of selected examples showing that populism is not a new phenomenon in Poland and has been spreading since the early 90s. The chapter ends with an insight into Polish populism, characterised by right-wing tendencies, and the triggering factors leading to the surge of the phenomenon in the country. This allows to identify some additional characteristic elements of populism typical of the Polish case.

### **POLAND**

In April 1989, the Polish Round Table Talks took place in Warsaw to discuss the future of the country amid the crumbling of the communist regime. The sessions' talks resulted in the Polish Round Table Agreement which paved the way to the country's democratisation allowing, among others, to create a new legislature and to schedule the first partially free and democratic parliamentary elections. Poland continued its transition towards liberal democracy, and in December 1990 Solidarity's leader Lech Wałęsa was elected President. Seven years later, in April, Poland's current Constitution was adopted by the National Assembly (*Zgromadzenie Narodowe*) and came into effect in October the same year. In the Constitution, the Republic of Poland – *Rzeczpospolita Polska* – is described as a parliamentary democracy with a multi-party system. The country's head of state is the President, while the head of the government is the Prime Minister, who leads the executive branch along with the Council of Ministers. The legislative function in Poland is performed by a bicameral Parliament formed by a lower chamber (*Sejm*) and an upper chamber (*Senat*). In the *Sejm*, sit 460 deputies elected for a four-year mandate by open party-list proportional representation in multi-seat constituencies using the d'Hondt method to allocate the seats with a 5% threshold for parties and 8% for coalitions. In the *Senat*, sit 100 senators also elected for a four-year mandate but using the one-round first-past-the-post method in single-member districts.

### **PARTY SYSTEM'S DEVELOPMENT**

In his work, Jerzy Jaskiernia discusses the development of Polish party system and describes it

as a "quasi-institutionalised" system, whose development "included a reception of the western pattern of political competition" and the adoption of a Constitution "based on European democratic standards". (Jaskiernia, 2017: 228-30) Jaskiernia then considers the electoral behaviour of Poles and, according to the statistics he observed, identifies three main features. "First, voter apathy in Poland is greatest among all the Central and East European countries. Second, the Poles do not have stable party preferences, (...) Third, the same instability is typical on the "supply side" – in every election politicians represent different positions." (Jaskiernia, 2017: 229) Additionally, building on Radosław Markowski's remarks, he stresses the political parties' inability to establish solid coalitions.

According to Jaskiernia, religious beliefs, national values, historical and cultural issues are "fundamental determinants of many political parties" and thus should be included among the factors influencing the party system of Poland. (Jaskiernia, 2017: 229) Continuing to discuss what impacted the most the development of the Polish party system, the scholar points out three major events: first, Poland's accession to the European Union during the 2004 enlargement which entailed several consequences in terms of democratic standards, rights and values. Second, Smoleńsk disaster when in 2010, on the way to the commemorations of the 1940 Katyń massacre, the presidential plane crashed and all the passengers died – including President Lech Kaczyński, high-ranking military officials and top-level political figures. The accident "caused a major split in Polish politics" and initiated an "endless fight" that opposed Civic Platform (PO) to Law and Justice (PiS). (Jaskiernia, 2017: 233 ) Third, the illegal phone tapping scandal that undermined the stability of Tusk government and spoiled the image of PO, when, in 2014, *Wprost* released the recordings of a shady agreement made three years before between the Home Affairs Minister and the Polish Central Bank President. Consequently, an investigation was opened, and multiple arrests were made while the government underwent a vote of confidence that it eventually won.

One more event must be considered: the 2015 migration crisis. Although the crisis did not hit Poland directly, and the country refused to co-operate with the EU on the relocation quota system, the migration crisis became a hot topic. It entered the political debate and appeared in the discourse of many party leaders, consequently affecting the political parties' relations and the electoral behaviour.

All these elements should be remembered when looking at the parliamentary elections' results

as they help to understand the party system's development and the changes characterising the ongoing dynamics among the main Polish political parties.

## **20 YEARS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (table in appendix)**

High political fragmentation and no threshold are the characteristics of the first free parliamentary election held in Poland in 1991. These features led to the coexistence of many different parties in the *Sejm* – the parties who received more votes were the Democratic Union (UD) and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), followed by Catholic Electoral Action, Citizens' Centre Accord (POC) and Polish People's Party (PSL). The 1991 election resulted in an unstable government, later defeated in a no-confidence vote, and an ineffective parliament, dissolved by the President in 1993. In 1993, a 5% threshold for parties was established; many right-wing parties were excluded, while leftist parties dominated the parliamentary elections: the former communists SLD came back to power and formed a coalition with PSL. Right-wing parties had learned the lesson and formed the party Election Action 'Solidarity' (AWS) which won the 1997 parliamentary election and established a coalition government with Freedom Union (UW). SLD became the second-largest party in 1997 and PSL lost almost half of its votes. In 2001, the parliamentary election was won by the electoral coalition formed by SLD and Labour Union (UP) that created a coalition government including PSL. The 2001 election is to be remembered since three new parties entered the political scene and gained enough votes to sit in the Parliament: Civic Platform, Law and Justice and the League of Polish Families (LPR). Moreover, taking a cue from Frances Millard, Jaskiernia writes "The fragmentation of the post-Solidarity right and centre provided opportunities for populist formations to make gains in a context of continuing transition-anxieties. The election marked the end of the historic division between the heirs of communism and the heirs of Solidarity." (Jaskiernia, 2017: 231) The year after Poland's EU accession, parliamentary and presidential elections almost coincided and were thus connected. Again, the incumbent government was defeated, PO arrived second, PSL lost more support and PiS emerged as the winner and created a coalition with Self-Defence of Republic of Poland (SRP) and LPR. However, the Parliament dissolved after accusations of corruption were made inside the leading coalition, and earlier elections were held two years ahead of the end of the term. The 2007 parliamentary election saw the victory of PO, that secured the absolute majority in the *Sejm*, over PiS and PSL. The next parliamentary election took place in 2011 and was deeply influenced by Smoleńsk disaster. For the first time in the

history of post-Communist Poland, the election was won by the incumbent party PO, while PiS, PSL and SLD lagged and the newly established Palikot Movement (RP) gained access to the Sejm.

### **2015 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION (table in appendix)**

50.92% of the Polish eligible voters took part in the 2015 parliamentary elections which resulted in the defeat of the incumbent PO against the absolute majority gained by PiS, heading a coalition formed by other minor parties (Solidarity Poland, Poland Together, and the Right-wing of the Republic). In 2015, PiS won not only the parliamentary election, but also the presidential race, and the party's candidate Andrzej Duda became the new head of state. When observing the results, some remarks are worth follow-ups.

First, United Left (ZL) was a coalition of leftist parties (Your Movement (TR, former RP), Polish Socialist Party, Labour Union, The Greens, Polish Labour Party) led by SLD that failed to gain any seats because of the 8% threshold for coalitions. Second, the support towards PSL continued decreasing; yet, the party managed to qualify. Third, new political parties entered the political scene in 2015, namely: Kukiz'15 (K'15), Modern (*Nowoczesna*), the Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic-Liberty and Hope (KORWiN), Together (*Razem*). Despite being rather new – all these parties were established between January and May 2015 – they were quite successful, and two of them gained access to the *Sejm*. Although KORWiN and Razem did not reach the 5% threshold, their results are emblematic of a political tendency shifting towards the new.

Fourth, as Jaskiernia explains, the defeat of the incumbent depended on the party's inability to express its ideas and intentions effectively. Thus, "PO supporters stayed home and others (...) opted for a new, more clearly market-liberal oriented party called *Nowoczesna*" (Jaskiernia, 2017: 238). Finally, the 2015 parliamentary election mark the end of the "so-called 'post-communist cleavage' which pitted post-Communist parties (mainly SLD and PSL) against post-solidarity parties (including PO and PiS) and characterized Polish politics for most of its democratic history" and opened for a new different political game. (Jaskiernia, 2017: 239)

### **2019 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION (table in appendix)**

The voters' turnout in the 2019 parliamentary election increased significantly, and 61.74% of the eligible voters expressed their preferences confirming the incumbent party for the second time in post-Communist Poland. However, although PiS won the majority in the *Sejm*, the

control of the *Senat* shifted in the opposition's hands. Furthermore, the last parliamentary vote shows an interesting pattern: all the electoral committees are made of formal or informal alliances led by the main political parties. Beginning with PiS, its political alliance – known as United Right (ZP) – includes Agreement (*Porozumienie*) also Solidary Poland (*Solidarna Polska*). The official coalition electoral committee headed by PO – Civic Coalition (KO) – gathers *Nowoczesna* (new party in 2015), The Greens (member of ZL in 2015), Polish Initiative, Social Democracy of Poland and Silesian Autonomy Movement. The former ZL changed the name into The Left, it is still led by SLD and still comprises TR and Polish Socialist Party, but there are three additions: Razem (new in 2015), Spring (*Wiosna*) and Polish Communist Party. Similarly, PSL leads a formal political alliance – Polish Coalition (KP) – composed of Kukiz'15, Union of European Democrats, Alliance of Democrats, Silesians together, Poland Needs Us and One-PL. Lastly, Confederation (*Konfederacja*), which registered as a political party, is in truth a KORWiN-led political alliance among many minor parties: Confederation of the Polish Crown, National League, National Movement, and Union of Christian Families.

One more observation is worth being put forward: both *Lewica* (The Left) and *Konfederacja* qualified in the *Sejm*. As Aleksandra Sojka explains, including "younger leftist candidates, who have the potential to renew the face of the Polish left " and "members of various parties with quite different electorates and goals" allowed *Lewica* to re-enter the Sejm in 2019. ("Polish election recap: A victory for Law and Justice, but the party may find governing more difficult than before," 2019) Whereas, the key to *Konfederacja*'s success lies in "the normalisation of radical right discourse within the state-controlled media" which helped the radical right-wing party to conquer part of PiS' electorate. ("Polish election recap: A victory for Law and Justice, but the party may find governing more difficult than before," 2019)

## **POPULISM IN POLAND**

This section now looks at populism in Poland. It shows that the phenomenon is not new in the country and is generally right-wing oriented. Since 1990, various cases can be identified as Wysocka did in her work by illustrating some selected examples in the realm of post-Communist Polish politics.

The first example Wysocka elaborates on is the 1990's presidential campaign of Stanisław Tyminski and his Party X. The candidate was new on the political scene; he has lived in Canada



and had the chance to observe American politics closely. Inspired by the American model, he built his discourse underlining the "us v. them" divide, presenting himself as "an outsider of the establishment," distant from the new political élite – "the network" – and directly addressing the feelings of the people – "the centre of his campaign." (Wysocka, 2009: 5) Tyminski was able to combine all these elements and exploit the unstable political and economic situation by rooting "his appeal in a populist critique of the entire political class – both post-communist and post-Solidarity – on behalf of those experiencing economic, political and social hardships resulting from the transition to democracy." (Stanley and Czeńnik, 2019: 70) Although his discrete success, Tyminski was defeated in the presidential election by Solidarity's leader, Lech Wałęsa – the second example described by the scholar. Wysocka argues Wałęsa's discourse became populist when he entered the presidential race and began building his "enemy: everyone who was against the liberal transformation and who questioned the Round Table Agreement." (Wysocka, 2009: 5) The candidate's appeal continued lying on populist tones even after he was elected President and being democratically elected reinforced Wałęsa's claims of being the one true representative of the people. Moreover, disrespect of parties and institutions, direct language, use of symbols of the Polish tradition proved again the populist attitude of the first freely elected President of Poland who presents himself as the man of the people. It is to note that in both Tyminski and Wałęsa cases, populism was used as a political communication strategy during the presidential campaigns. Wysocka proceeds discussing another case of populism in Polish politics the party Self-Defence of Republic of Poland (SRP). SRP was born an agrarian movement but soon gained the support of "other social groups that were disappointed with the transformation" and developed into a trade union in January 1992 before being established as a political party in June the same year. (Wysocka, 2009: 6) The party was known for its anti-establishment protests and the "eye-catching repertoire of direct action and the controversial statements of its charismatic leader Andrzej Lepper." (Stanley and Czeńnik, 2019: 71) However, it did not qualify in the Sejm until 2001 when it also joined the coalition government under PiS' lead. What explains the relatively high support towards the party are its "promises to fight unemployment", anti-establishment rhetoric, critique of the economic transition and Euroscepticism. (Wysocka, 2009: 6) Furthermore, Wysocka claims that SRP's populist nature "is visible in the party program" and concludes "The open appeal to populism in the party program and the charismatic, populist leadership makes Self-defence the only party on the Polish political scene to have used

populism as an ideology." (Wysocka, 2009: 6) The author also illustrates the case of the League of Polish Families (LPR) in her work. LPR also entered the Sejm in 2001 and was the result of a "combination of a number of Catholic nationalistic parties that contested feminism, gay rights, abortion, and euthanasia." (Wysocka, 2009: 6) In its programme, the party identified three major enemies – the establishment and what Tyminski called "the network", the EU and liberalism – while promoting "tradition, religion, patriotism, and (...) the role of the nation" and receiving the support of the Catholic radio broadcast Radio Maryja. According to the scholar, LPR has used populism as a thin-centred ideology, and thus, emerged as a "populist radical right party." (Wysocka, 2009: 7) Wysocka lastly presents the most known case of populism in Polish politics: Law and Justice, a political party created by the Kaczyński twins in 2001 that immediately secured its access to the Sejm. PiS gained its support thanks to its "anti-Communist anti-corruption agenda," its lustration campaign and its promise of defending the common people against "the network" – conceived "as a deal between the ex-communist elite, big business, and the media." (Wysocka, 2009: 7) As Ben Stanley points out, PiS describes the elite network "*układ*" as originated from an agreement "between the communist-era nomenklatura and liberal Solidarity, with the former yielding power to the latter, in exchange for impunity for past crimes and opportunities for enrichment under the new regime." (Stanley and Cześnik, 2019: 73) Wysocka stresses the inherent contradiction of the Kaczyński twins who created PiS – "a mass and populist party" – as the heir of their previous Centre Agreement Party (PC) – an "elitist one" – and explains this change was connected to Lech Kaczyński's goal of creating "a large centre-right party", which became evident years later. (Wysocka, 2009: 8) At the end of the 2001-2005 parliamentary term, marked by the "the radicalisation of Polish politics," PiS' discourse framed the political competition against its opponent Civic Platform (PO) as a choice between "the 'solidaristic' vision they embodied or the 'liberal' vision of Poland offered by PO." (Stanley and Cześnik, 2019: 73 and Szczerbiak, 2007: 204) Through time, the party underwent some changes. From using populism as a political communication strategy in public discourse, the party leader ended up using it as a thin-centred ideology, which made the author define PiS a "populist radical right party". (Wysocka, 2009: 8) Another case of populism in Polish political parties is K'15, a movement founded in May 2015 by the punk-rock artist and presidential candidate Paweł Kukiz, whose "main campaign issue was electoral reform" and who claimed to act for the good of the citizens. (Nardelli, 2015) A study conducted by Marta Wrześniewska-Pietrzak and

Małgorzata Kołodziejczak analysed the leader's political discourse and concluded his "public linguistic performance has a clear populist style." (Wrześniewska-Pietrzak & Kołodziejczak, 2018: 262) In the beginning, the anti-establishment movement – led by an ordinary man close to the citizens – co-operated with National Movement and other far-right groups, was highly Eurosceptic and "dedicated to 'destroy partocracy.'" (Lansford, 2017b: 1219) After the parliamentary election, K'15 changed its stances and shifted towards less radical tones abandoning far-right affiliations, Euroscepticism and social-conservative views. Despite the changes, "the priorities and preferences of the movement are broadly consistent with the typical profile of populist radical right parties." (Stanley and Czeński, 2019: 76) K'15 remains a populist centre-right party headed by a leader who relies heavily on populism as a political communication strategy. Janusz Korwin-Mikke has long been involved in Polish politics, and his right-wing, neoconservative, anti-bureaucracy and Eurosceptic party KORWiN participated in the 2015 parliamentary election but did not enter the Sejm until 2019 as the leader of *Konfederacja*. In their work, Artur Lepiński and Agnieszka Stępińska analyse and compare K'15 and KORWiN claiming the parties and their leaders share several similar features, above all "their radical right-wing populist character." (Lepiński & Stępińska, 2018: 72) Another characteristic noted by the authors is the choice of the parties' leaders to prefer online communication to conventional mainstream forms of communication. Relying on social media to directly address the audience using a rather simplistic language and emotional tones made them look closer to the people they claim to protect against the establishment. However, unlike K'15 that mitigated its tones moving to less radical tones, Korwin-Mikke continued fuelling his right-wing political discourse with populist sentiments that led *Konfederacja* inside the Sejm in 2019.

These are the most striking examples of populism in Polish politics since 1990. Clearly, political parties in Poland are increasingly relying on populism in various manners. Some parties adopt populism as their ideology, while others use it as a thin-centred ideology and combine it with others. Some parties build their rhetoric on populist tones and introduce populist elements in their discourse, and others employ populism as a political communication strategy – a means for their ends. To a certain extent, populism or its characteristic traits can be detected in more and more parties in the Polish political scenario, which has lately been dominated by right-wing parties that have influenced the development of populism in the country.

## **POLISH POPULISM**

Looking at the phenomenon in the Polish context, it emerges that the causes of populism described in the previous chapter also played a role in the surge of populism in Poland. Nonetheless, other aspects should be considered as they lead to the identification of some additional characteristic elements typical of Polish populism which is mostly right-wing oriented.

The collapse of communism was followed by a decade of neoliberal reforms (shock therapy) sustaining the country's de-communisation and transition to democracy and free-market economy. Despite the benefits they provided, shock therapy reforms led to unfavourable outcomes too. On the one hand, they resulted in "the collapse of large communist-era enterprises and massive unemployment that remained at about 20% for 15 years." (Sierakowski, 2019) On the other hand, they generated an insufficiently institutionalised party system criticised for its disordered representation and its inability of marking a clear break with the communist past. The concept of party systems' institutionalisation was introduced by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully to describe "a process by which a practice or organisation becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted." (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4) Kriesi builds on the concept and observes that the institutionalisation of the party systems in Western European democracies is more advanced and stable than in CEE, Poland included, where party systems "have not yet produced mainstream parties that adequately represent their constituencies." (Kriesi, 2014: 373) In addition to the lack of party systems' institutionalisation, considered as one of the triggers for the rise of populism in CEE and Poland, the scholar emphasises the role played by the people's perceptions too. Indeed, "anti-elitist sentiment", "perceived political corruption," "feelings of unfair treatments by authorities" and "perceived lack of representation" explain the "widespread dissatisfaction of the Central and Eastern European publics with their political elites" and pave the way to populist mobilisation. (Kriesi; 2014: 374) These trends can be found in the origins of populism in Poland, where high unemployment rates and perceived unequal resources' distribution and income inequality combined to inadequate replacements in the system cadres led to the people's disenchantment and distrust in both political and economic domains and furthered the antagonism between centre and periphery – based on "lack of cultural rather than economic capital, conservative attitudes, and lower levels of trust in institutions, which lead to an understanding of the welfare state as responsible for providing direct social transfers rather than good public services." (Sierakowski,

2019) In this precarious and fragile situation, during the 1990s, Polish populists began to emerge, but “the dominance of the post-communist divide prevented populists from achieving any conspicuous success: they were either marginal parties of the Party X type or were minor players in large umbrella coalitions.” (Stanley and Czeńnik, 2019: 70) In the early 2000s, Polish populists reached their first successes thanks to their strategy based on 1) attacks to the new establishment accused of keeping ties with the old communist regime, 2) allegations against foreign capital and foreign powers demining national sovereignty, 3) critiques of the neoliberal reforms and lack of alternatives in economic policies, 4) celebration of *Solidarność* and its role in the defeat of communism and 5) praise of Poland’s history and tradition and of the national identity of its citizens and their moral integrity based on Christian values. For a decade, populists addressed the people directly, seconded their feelings and demands and exploited their “anxieties of transition.” (Millard, 2006: 1007) They built up their discourse on the widespread sense of crisis and presented themselves as one with the people, the alternative to neo-liberal policies and the outsiders of the establishment because of their “newness” given by “the rotation of parties in and out of power.” (Sikk, 2012: 465. Stanley and Czeńnik, 2019: 71)

During its development in Poland, populism was largely influenced by right-wing discourses and more recently by PiS’ rhetoric. In Polish political scene, more and more dominated by right-wing tendencies, populism developed some additional characteristic elements that could also be detected in the examples of Polish populism illustrated in the previous paragraph. In line with such trends, these additional traits are:

- 1) the glorification of the past;
- 2) *Polishness*: the quality of belonging to Poland, embracing the country’s tradition, and its Christian values. This is often connected to national identity, ethnicity and national image and is generally mentioned along with patriotism while holding ties with nationalism.
- 3) positive attitude towards the *Roman Catholic Church*: Christianity plays a crucial role in Poland’s past and present. Right-wing Polish populists often refer to the country’s special ties to the Catholic Church and consider Christianity a fundamental component of Polishness.
- 4) family and society: the individual is often understood as a member of a larger group and their freedoms are understood first as collective and later as individual. These social constructs are conceived as traditional, natural and connected to religious and conservative views;
- 5) Solidarity: it represents both *Solidarność* and its victory against fascism and also its legacy as

anti-establishment movement that guides the people to the common good, their independence and freedom;

6) inclusiveness and equality: to repair the antagonism between centre and peripheries Polish populists often underline their will to include all parts of Poland and all its citizens as part of the nation. Polish populists address citizens' feelings to make them feel equal, valued and included in the national project, and they emphasise equal and fair opportunities as a testimony of inclusiveness and non-discrimination;

7) restoration: Polish populists usually criticise the reforms implemented during the transition time and their results and call for real changes by using terms such as restoration, renewal, ...;

8) *Polonia*: restoring Poland's past splendour does not only aim at making right what is wrong and giving citizens what they deserve, but also at presenting Poland as a nation of opportunity to entice Polonia and Polish communities abroad to come back. Polonia is highly valued by populists, who grant them recognition, rights and advantages;

9) suspicion of foreign powers: they are perceived as a potential threat for the country and the citizens, as discriminating Poland and restricting its freedom and national sovereignty. They are accused of influencing Poles' moral integrity, homogeneity and their traditional and religious values with modern ideologies.

It should be acknowledged that, among these additional characteristic elements, some are crucial in defining Polish populism.<sup>3</sup> Polishness, Catholicism and Polonia became key traits of populism since 2015 when right-wing tendencies emerged and PiS started dominating Poland's political scene and dictating its language. The three key elements are now the most characteristic in the Polish case.

Lastly, Polish populism is generally right-wing oriented and so are some the characteristic elements defining the phenomenon in the country. However, this work does not focus on right-wing Polish parties and coalitions only but aims at measuring populism in all the main ones. Despite the sometimes-right-wing origin of the characteristic elements previously described, they will anyways be used to measure populism because they define the most common shape the phenomenon took in the country. Moreover, each Polish party and coalition tends to take clear

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<sup>3</sup> These three key characteristic elements of Polish populism are explored further in chapter 5.

stances regarding these elements, either emphasising either ignoring them, and thus, their positive, negative or neutral attitudes can be evaluated.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In the quest for understanding the validity and reasons behind remarks like “populism is on the rise in Europe” and other comments describing Poland as a populist country, this dissertation explores the populist phenomenon in today’s Poland. There are several studies on populism in the country; however, most of them focus on political parties and leaders commonly labelled as populist and ignore the whole spectrum of Polish party system. This study seeks to expand the scope of research on populism in Poland, as it expects to find notable traces of populism also in political parties and coalitions generally not described as populist. Therefore, the analysis of the country’s main political parties and coalitions’ electoral programmes can reveal a scenario which differs from the usual one. Indeed, this study foresees to find a political system in which all parties and coalitions rely on populism to a different extent. The presumption formulated by this study is that the highest level of populism and the lowest belong to PiS and *Lewica* respectively, whereas *Konfederacja*, KO and KP also present remarkable levels of populism.

The strategy adopted to answer the research question “how much populist are the main political parties and coalitions in contemporary Poland?” consists of: 1) selecting the units of analysis to include in the study and the primary sources for the data collection; 2) defining the categories, key categories and units of meanings to be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively; 3) explaining the coding procedure used to code and evaluate the units of meaning and categories; and 4) analysing the data collected to allocate the units of analysis in the index of populism elaborated on the conceptualisation offered here.

#### **PRIMARY SOURCES and UNITS OF ANALYSIS**

To observe and understand the relationship of Polish main political parties and coalitions to populism in the contemporary political scenario, the official electoral programmes they presented in the 2019 parliamentary election are used as primary sources. Electoral programmes are the most updated official documents that parties use to introduce themselves and show their objectives to the people. Therefore, they are fruitful, valid and reliable sources for content analysis. All data are collected directly from the programmes and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The selection criteria used to decide what political parties to include in the study is the electoral threshold – this means a party should receive at least 5% share of the electoral vote,



while a coalition 8%. The political parties and coalitions that, in the 2019 parliamentary election, fulfilled such requirement and qualified in the Polish parliament are considered the country's main political parties. As a result, the units of analysis are *Zjednoczona Prawica* (PiS), *Koalicja Obywatelska*, *Koalicja Polska*, *Lewica* and *Konfederacja*.

## **PREMISES**

Before explaining the methodology of this study, some points should be acknowledged.

- The 2019 official electoral programmes are only available in Polish. Therefore, they were translated in English by the author and later checked by a native speaker, who guaranteed that form, tone and content stayed as closest as possible to the original text. The difficulties given by conducting content analysis in a different language were thoroughly considered, and all measures to prevent misunderstandings and ensure accurate comprehensions of explicit and implicit meanings were taken.
- The electoral programmes analysed display objective differences, the most evident being their length. The differences and their consequences are considered in the analysis to provide a fair comparison among the programmes. Each category was assigned a value in line with the characteristics of its programmes and *each category's overall value* was later calculated to provide the *final score of every electoral programme*.
- No software was used to analyse the texts and code the data. Given the research topic, the selected textual material and the method of analysis, manual coding was the best option to guarantee reliable content analysis, especially on the qualitative perspective.
- To some extent, all political parties and coalitions tend to populism in their electoral programmes as the aim is to attract the people and gain their votes. This work did not expect to find any programme completely free from populist references, however, the goal is to measure the varying degree of populism and understand how the concept is used.
- Because this study largely relies on qualitative analysis, the strive for objectivity was the main challenge to address. Confrontation and colleagues' opinions helped to reduce any bias and to ensure the author's personal interpretation did not interfere with the results.

## **CATEGORIES, KEY CATEGORIES and UNITS OF MEANING**

In this study the term *category* describes the classes into which the detected units of meaning are organised and assigned. The categories used for coding the electoral programmes are based

on the conceptualisation here adopted and correspond to the characteristic elements of populism and its Polish variation presented in the previous chapters. Not all categories are equally relevant and some of the characteristic elements they represent are crucial indicators of populism and belong to the phenomenon exclusively. These *key categories* are society dichotomy, central role of the people, construction of the antagonist, appeal to the people and anti-elitist/-establishment sentiments. These are combined with three of the characteristic elements typical of Polish populism: Polishness, Roman Catholic Church and Polonia. The term *unit of meaning* is here used to indicate all references, words, expressions and sentences that can be detected and assigned to the category they belong to. They consist of all parts of the discourse indicating the concepts represented by the categories. The units of meaning are developed based on the descriptions of the characteristic elements of populism and Polish populism.

The following scheme lists the categories and their respective units of meaning:

- 1. *society dichotomy*:** anything referring to the idea of the society divided in two separate and antagonist groups. Words: us and them, groups, opposition, contrast, difference.
- 2. *central role of the people*:** anything referring to the people and their (common) good as the core interest of their action. Words: people, citizens, Poles, people's rights, people's interests, people's needs, for the common good; with the adjectives: good, hard-working, true, honest, homogenous, unite.
- 3. *construction of the antagonist*:** anything referring to those threatening the people or acting against their good, any criticisms against other groups that are not the people. Words: the elite, the network, the previous government, the predecessors, those before us, the others, those who made mistakes; with the adjectives: irresponsible, self-centred, erroneous, wrong, helpless, useless, dangerous, threatening, corrupt.
- 4. *appeal to the people instilling insecurity and urging for action*:** anything indicating sources of insecurity and promising security against them. Words: threat, challenge, danger, crisis, critical, risky, act, protect, guarantee, ensure, now, soon, in the next elections, before it is too late.
- 5. *populist leaders*:** anything suggesting that they are one with the people and understand them better than others and anything that shows their results as more successful than those of the antagonists. Words: we know, we are aware, we understand, unlike our predecessor, our country, nation, state, people, families, communities, children.

**6. *anti-elitist, anti-establishment and a-political sentiments*:** anything referring to the aversion to the antagonist and system (in political and administrative terms) perceived as wrong and dangerous. Words: the system, the political system, the parties, free from politicians; with the adjectives: dangerous, threatening, corrupt, wrong, unnecessary.

**7. *people's sovereignty*:** anything referring to people empowerment and their role as sovereigns, decisions about public aspects. Words: sovereign people, the people must vote/decide, the state is subordinated to the citizens, the people come first.

**8. *people's general will and common sense*:** anything referring to the importance of following the people's will and common sense, decisions about private aspects. Words: the people's will, the people's voice, the people's choice, the people's decision, dialogue, cooperation, participation, listening to the people because they know, expressing their will at the elections.

**9. *authentic representation*:** anything referring to the importance of fair elections, true representation and the people's vote. Words: true and fair elections, not-manipulated, respect for the voters' choices.

**10. *opposition to corrupting modernity in favour of natural past and traditional lifestyle that are also the basis for a change in the future so that it resembles a better version of the past*:** anything referring to the celebration of a natural and traditional past, the negative consequences brought by modernisation and the promotion of a future connected to the past, natural lifestyle. Words: in the past, natural or traditional lifestyle, corrupt and dangerous innovation/modernisation, modern experiments, dangerous automatization, negative development, forgetting the past/origins.

**11. *simple and direct communication style*** addressing the people's emotions.

For Polish populism:

**12. *glorification of the past*:** anything referring to the past, historical events or figures. Words: history, tradition, heritage, memory, memorial, historical policy.

**13. *Polishness*:** anything referring to what makes a true Pole, especially in relation to history and religion, and to nation pride. Words: Polishness, patriotism national identity, state identity, Polish identity, culture, tradition, image, brand, language.

**14. *Roman Catholic Church*:** anything referring to the role of religion in Poland. Words: Catholic Church, Pope, Christian tradition, Christianity, religion, god.

**15. *family and society*:** anything placing the family at the centre and stresses the role of the

individual as member of a larger group – local communities, society. Words: family, society, local community, civil society, common rights, parents, seniors, professions, children, kids, offspring, future generations.

**16. Solidarity:** anything referring to solidarity both the movement and the concept. Words: *Solidarność*, Solidarity movement, solidarity, solidary Poland.

**17. inclusiveness and equality:** anything referring to the importance of including every person and type of activity all over the country and guaranteeing fair and equal treatment. Words: including, inclusive, all, each, everyone, regardless, equal chances, equal opportunities, equality, fairness, non-discrimination, against inequalities, all of Poland's regions, cities, municipalities, voivodship, poviats, rural areas, countryside, the whole country, throughout the country and all lists of professions or social categories.

**18. restoration:** anything referring to the need of restoring the splendour of the past and to repair the damages occurred during the transition. Words: Poland in ruins, renovate, restore, re-do, renew, repair, reform, change, solve, fix.

**19. Polonia:** anything referring to Poles living abroad. Words: Polonia, Poles permanently abroad, Polish diaspora, diasporans, Polish communities abroad, Polish migrants.

**20. suspicion of foreign powers:** anything referring to the potential threats that foreign powers pose to Poland and Poles and the need to act consciously anytime foreign influences may interfere. Words: aversion to multiculturalism, aversion to modern foreign ideologies, the EU disregarding/ignoring Poland, other countries being granted more, double standards, military threats, historical disputes, memory battles.

## **CODING PROCEDURE**

The textual materials are scrutinised to detect all units of meaning they contain. The units are examined and assigned to the category they belong to according to the list described in the previous paragraph. Consequently, they are evaluated. Their evaluation consists of a combination of quantitative content analysis and qualitative analysis methods. This means that each unit is counted and given a value from one to three describing the emphasis a party or coalition puts on it in relation to populism. The lowest value (1) simply counts the unit and indicates its presence in the electoral programme. The medium value (2) indicates that the unit's presence in the programme is not casual and there is a slight connection to a bigger populist tendency given the context. The highest value (3) indicates the unit's strong pertinence to the category, the great

importance it conveys and a close connection to populism. The more populist a unit of meaning is, the higher its value.

Once all units are allocated in the right category and assigned a value, the values of each unit per category are summed together. The number resulting from this addition is the *total value of units of meaning per category*. This number is later used to evaluate each category in a wider perspective.

To obtain a fair comparison among the programmes, it would not be enough to consider only the total value of the units per category, because longer programmes can include more units, and thus, score higher numbers. Therefore, each category is examined in perspective and assigned an overall value ranging from one to three. The *overall value of a category* is decided by evaluating the way the category is covered throughout the whole electoral programme, and thus, establishing if the characteristic element corresponding to such a category is treated in strongly, rather or slightly populist tones. The evaluation is supported by significant examples from the texts describing a party or coalition's relationship to populism in relation to that specific element. The assignation of a category's overall value also considers the total values of the units of meaning per category.

Briefly, when a characteristic element of populism is treated in a strongly populist way and the total value of units of meaning per category is relatively high, the category is assigned three points. When a characteristic element is treated in a rather populist way and the total value of units of meaning per category is not relatively high or low, then the category is assigned two points. When a characteristic element is treated in a slightly populist and more general way and the total values of the units of meaning per category is relatively low, then the category is assigned one point. The stronger the connection to populism throughout the programme, the higher the overall value of such category.

It should be noted that the distinction between key and non-key categories does not affect the count and evaluation of units of meaning, but it does affect the overall value of a key category. Indeed, whenever one of the eight key categories is assigned the highest value (three points), it is given one extra point. This aims at emphasising the relevance of such characteristic element in defining populism and at differentiating it from others which are not typical of the populist phenomenon only.

It should also be noted that the category "simple and direct communication style" is assessed

by a comprehensive evaluation of the characteristics of the style adopted throughout the electoral programme. The evaluation is based on five questions (are the people, and their feelings, addressed directly? Is the linguistic register easy enough to be understood by everyone? Are the sentences short and simple? Is the tone subjective? Overall, is it fluent, easy to read and clearly comprehensible in all its parts?) that are addressed in the analysis and allow to assign the category a value from one to three again describing if it is slightly, rather or strongly populist.

Again, a category's overall value is decided based on the way an electoral programme covers the characteristic element represented by such category and by considering the total value of units of meaning of such category. Moreover, it is supported with examples from the texts describing the party or coalition's relationship to populism throughout the programme.

All the overall values assigned to the categories are then summed together to obtain the *final score of each electoral programme*. The possible highest final score is 68, this is given by multiplying the categories (20) by the highest possible value (three) and then adding the extra points assigned the key categories (eight) when covered in highly populist tones ( $20 \times 3 + 8 = 68$ ). These results help to compare the political parties and coalitions' attitudes to populism.

Finally, and most importantly, by counting how many categories were covered in the programmes it is possible to establish if the concept is treated as an ideology, a thin-centred ideology or a strategy of political communication, and thus, to allocate political parties and coalitions in a four-level index that indicates their degree of populism. The levels are:

1. *not populist*, when the electoral programme does not feature any of the characteristic elements of Polish populism.
2. *rather populist*, when populism is used as a strategy of political communication, as a discourse or a framework for the core message being conveyed. This happens when only a few of populism's characteristic elements are present – from one up to 14 elements out of the 20 – and they are not central to the party's core belief.
3. *populist*, when populism is used as a thin-centred ideology, as one of the ideologies of a political party but blended with other (“thicker”) ideologies. This happens when most of populism's characteristic elements are present – from 15 up to 19 elements out of the 20 – and are not at the centre of the party's belief, but they are sub-ordinated to other concepts and values belonging to the other ideologies.
4. *strongly populist*, when populism is used as an ideology *per se*. This happens when all the

characteristic elements of populism are present – 20 elements out of 20 – clearly identifiable, repeated multiple times and emphasised as the core belief of the party while no other ideologies prevail.

## **CLARIFICATIONS**

It should be acknowledged that the categories can sometimes overlap as the same unit of meaning can fit into more than one category. It is anyway possible to discern the exact significance of the units by isolating each word of a sentence, identifying the main concepts and messages conveyed and understanding them in context. This allows to find the dominant category to which the unit of meaning belongs. In such a scenario, the unit of meaning is assigned to its dominant category and given two or three points (according to its connection to populism), but it is also registered in the other category, or categories, and given one point because of its presence and indirect connection to it.

The twenty categories elaborated to code the electoral programmes were developed according to the conceptualisation of populism adopted in this study; they correspond to the characteristic elements defining the phenomenon and its Polish version. Working with so many categories is challenging and demanding but ensures accuracy and leads to precise results because every detail is considered and coded carefully. The distinction between key and non-key categories contributes to enhance precision in the analysis.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings resulting from the investigation of the electoral programmes of Poland's main political parties and coalitions in the 2019 parliamentary election. It begins with an insight into each electoral programme. Every category is described in the context of the electoral programme and the values assigned are explained and supported with the most relevant examples taken from the texts. A separate section analyses the category corresponding to populism's characteristic element of a direct and simple communication style. Lastly, the chapter offers an overview on the analysis' findings and introduces the index of populism adopted to classify political parties and coalitions according to the levels of populism registered in their electoral programmes.

#### THE FINDINGS

***Prawo i Sprawiedliwość:*** PiS' strongly populist tones are evident in the people's key role and the antagonist's construction. PiS-led coalition's priorities are assisting the people and granting "The dignity of every human being", their freedom and well-being. PiS ensures this is clearly understood by repeatedly stating that every reform will benefit the people, meet their needs and protect their rights. Likewise, "the principle of common good" is often emphasised to express dedication to Poles. The central role of the people emerges in the strongly populist promise of granting everyone "freedom of choice" and seconding the citizens' general will through open dialogue "with the social side" and "First of all, by listening to the voice of society." The construction of the antagonist is functional to PiS' appeal to the people that calls for re-elections to finish what it had started. The coalition's political opponents (PO and PSL) are attacked directly and accused of having established a "late post-communism" system maintaining ties with the previous Communism regime ("Late post-communism was not a new system, it was, as already indicated, only a restored system, which did not mean its relaxation or in any way the violation of the deep stabilizing structures that arose during the birth and strengthening of post-communism.") In PiS' discourse such system is accused of carrying out "A gigantic propaganda operation, denigration, lies and insults", manipulating the media to confuse the society ("This policy was essentially a massive manipulation system."), demolishing democracy ("Under the "project" all control mechanisms functioning in real democracy were excluded.") and disregarding Poland's interests in the EU. Often in the programme, the target of the party's



criticism is Donald Tusk and his actions as Prime Minister and as European Council President. Tusk's position in the EU reinforced the strongly populist stances of PiS against the EU ("The EU treaty provisions cannot be the basis for destroying the Polish national identity, tradition, culture, model of life and customs.") and foreign powers especially on the topics of national identity, national sovereignty and economy ("In addition to the rejection of the pro publico bono principle, the predisposition of the new old elite to submitting to external influences, also at the identity level, was also of great importance."; "It should also be pointed out that activities aimed at mobilizing abroad not only hindered the current state policy and making necessary changes, but above all gave rise to the erosion of state sovereignty."). Besides "PO-PSL project," Tusk, the EU and foreign capitals, the coalition describes other threats from which it offers security as a strongly populist leader coming from the people and that can truly understand them. Among the other threats, the programme mentions: "political struggles" and "numerous social dysfunctions: clientelism, cliques, nepotism and - finally – corruption"; "harmful ideology that interferes with social structures - family, marriage, communities - aimed at building a "new great world" and a new man"; "attacks targeting Poland internationally"; "social Darwinism" and "the demographic crisis, the family crisis, and the parenting crisis and the problem of emigration." This last crisis, particularly worries PiS that, in line with its strongly populist attitude, places Polish family and society in the centre of its attention on several different issues stating that "It is worth that Polish families sustain and develop." PiS' tendencies to preserve the national interest and identity and the traditional understanding of the family also emerge in the glorification of the country's past. The programme reminisces in a strongly populist way all relevant past events, including Poland's sufferings from partitions, World Wars and Communist times; and it focuses on the European tradition and Western civilisation that formed Polish cultural heritage. In the section dedicated to the diagnosis of the state from post-Communism, the programme criticises the country's transition and the reforms introduced and strongly calls for "the permanent repair of the state." Concepts like the need of rebuilding and restoring are frequently mentioned because "In the chain of causes and effects, state repair is in the first place." Poland's history is inextricably connected to religion and the pre-eminent role of the Catholic Church as expressed by several references ("The role of the universal Church was also great," "We appreciate the role of religion in social life and the special importance of the Catholic faith for Poles," "the specific status of the Catholic Church in our national and state life is extremely important.") All these

elements culminate in the celebration of the Polish nation understood “as a community of culture, language, historical experience, political tradition and civilization values, as a community of fate” and of the Polish national identity best expressed by the concept of Polishness to which PiS refers as follows “You can be Polish without being a Catholic or a religious person, but you cannot believe that Polishness can exist without the heritage of the Catholic Church.” Polishness is completed by solidarity, which in PiS’ programme combines both the concept and the movement and is often framed in strongly populist tones. The inclusive nature and call for equality of the coalition led by PiS are strongly populist as the programme constantly refers to “every citizen” or “all Pole” while claiming that “Poland is a common home for all and for everyone. Because Poland is one!” Several social groups and working categories are listed along with the promises to “eliminate all inequalities in professional life,” to “create social service centres for individual groups at risk of exclusion” and to “strengthen the prohibition of discrimination against employees, students and pupils on the basis of their views and beliefs (religious beliefs).” The differences between centre and periphery are also considered by PiS when writing “The village, where about 40% of Poles live, is part of Poland as important as cities, and Poles living in the countryside have the same right as urban residents to a dignified life. The development of Poland must be even, leading to levelling the differences in the standard of living in the countryside and in the city.” The importance of being Polish and including everyone emerges when the programme argues that “PiS has always perceived the role of Polonia and Poles living abroad as an important entity.” This explains the strongly populist way in which Polonia is treated in the programme.

Despite the importance of the people and the aversion to their antagonist are clearly stressed, society dichotomy is not so strongly and directly addressed nor is the anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiments. Indeed, these two categories are covered in a rather populist way. The society divide and the groups’ antagonism can be often perceived although is not carefully treated. Likewise, anti-elitism is discussed in several parts of the programme, but not thoroughly explained. Authentic representation is discussed in relation to the upcoming election and refers to the will of Poles expressed through their votes but not specifically to the need of truly representing the citizens. The natural past is repeatedly addressed and often juxtaposed to modernity and the distortions it introduced which are still looked at with suspicion (“Euthanasia, eugenics, experiments on the human genome, (voluntary) abortion on request - the contemporary

world has almost unlimited possibilities of interfering with human nature”). Therefore, the programme argues “The development of Poland should be in harmony with the protection of native nature and landscape.”

The only category treated in a slightly populist manner by the PiS-led coalition in its programme is people’s sovereignty, indeed this element is barely mentioned and not given direct importance as many others.

***Koalicja Polska:*** The people and their rights are at the centre of KP’s interests which treats this category in a strongly populist way (“Our goal is [a] Poland, where the most important is respect for other people;” “We want Poland to be good hosts, happy and creative people;” “decisions are made as close to the inhabitants as possible.”) The appeal to the people is strongly populist and motivated by a sense of urgency created through the repetition of words such as “huge problem,” “disasters,” “risk,” “challenge,” “struggle” – especially in relation to farming. The establishment, “the monopoly of political parties” and “excessive bureaucracy” are severely criticised in KP’s programme which argues for “independence from politicians” as suggested by other sentences such as: “Currently, the present electoral law entails that the supreme power in Poland does not belong to the Nation but to the heads of the largest political parties.” People’s sovereignty is also treated in a strongly populist way and the relevance of participatory democracy and popular vote are often proved (“We want to strengthen the role of voters in controlling the authorities and increase their influence on public affairs.”; “In order for the nation to regain control over its representatives, we want to introduce a majoritarian system of representation in which at least half of the parliamentary mandates will be elected in single-mandate constituencies.”) It follows that the people’s general will and common sense are equally vital, this is showed by multiple references to the importance of listening to people’s voice (“the most important voice belongs to the citizens,” “the voice of every Pole is heard and listened to”). Calling for a change in the future that resembles a better version of the past was classified as a strongly populist category in KP’s programme because of comments that highly emphasise the value of developing tradition in the future (“Therefore, faithful to our ideals, committed to tradition, but also thinking about the future;” “Our task is to take care of the development of local tradition.”) Family, children and youth particularly, and local communities are central to KP. Their important role is outlined many times in the programme suggesting that the category is treated in a strongly populist manner. The last strongly populist category in the programme is inclusiveness and equality, these

aspects are evident in the party's dedication to several different social classes, working categories and various areas of the countries, always maintaining a focus on farmers and countryside. ("where nobody feels discriminated and the voice of every Pole is heard and listened to;" "[A] Poland, where everyone can live in dignity without offending;" "Poland for all its citizens;" "Our ideal is Poland without differences in the quality of life in the city and in the countryside;" "in particular to owners of small shops, pharmacies, greengrocers, florists, hairdressers, workshops, craft workshops;" "voivodship self-government, cooperating with the poviats and commune self-government.")

The society dichotomy is expressed in a rather populist way in the beginning of the programme ("to the citizens, not to political parties;" "not only for the chosen ones;" "to the citizens, not to the leaders of political parties."), but it is not stressed further. The antagonist's construction is not strongly populist as the party's programme does not attack other political parties but generally refers to the "corruption and the lack of proper transparency in public life" and claims that "Almost every year, our political scene is shaken by scandals related to corruption crimes, including the participation of politicians or political candidates." Similarly, there are no notable direct attacks when discussing foreign powers, but a diffuse suspicion mostly concerning energy security or unfavourable conditions for Polish farmers in the EU. The manner KP's leaders present themselves is rather populist as they claim to know the expectations of Poles ("where you want to live" "Poles expect real changes"). Such ability to understand Poles is combined to a sense of unity with the people strengthened by repeatedly calling "our" children, homeland, country, culture and tradition.

KP approaches six categories in a slightly populist manner and no special attention is given to them throughout the programme. Both authentic representation and Polonia are dedicated one sentence only ("Currently, the present electoral law entails that the supreme power in Poland does not belong to the Nation but to the heads of the largest political parties;" "Finally, the Polonia and the disabled could participate in the elections without having to overcome unnecessary barriers.") The history of Poland is barely mentioned in the programme that only refers to tradition from a cultural perspective. The concept of Polishness does not appear at all, nor does any trace of patriotism; however, the people are often referred to as "Poles." Solidarity is named twice as a concept but is not considered a key element. Restoration and the terms

surrounding such category are used in a particularistic manner and never to argue for the need of rebuilding the whole country.

***Koalicja Obywatelska:*** Despite the society's dichotomy is not highly emphasised explicitly in KO's programme but approached in a slightly populist manner, the people and the antagonist are at the centre of the party's interests, which treats these categories in a highly populist way. The programme is characterised by great attention to the "honest" and "hard-working" people in many different situations and by notable dedication to protecting "rights and freedoms of citizens" and "human rights and civil liberties." The antagonist's construction is carried out in a strongly populist way through direct attacks against the current government, as several key passages demonstrate ("Today's state creates a privileged caste of people from the ruling party and drains the society to maintain its power;" "Their infringements in the last four years and evident violations of the fundamental law mean the need to clarify the constitutional and legal responsibility of the persons currently holding the highest functions in the stat;." "We believe that the terrible legacy of the past four years in Poland is a consequence of the authorities repeatedly violating democracy, law, including the Constitution, and the building of a party state;" "We will break the inefficiency and passivity of PiS in the EU's work and the degradation of Poland to the EU's second league.") The reiteration of such ideas reinforces two other categories that are classified as strongly populist, namely: the appeal to the people and the anti-elitist sentiment. The sense of insecurity is magnified through the description of emerging crises in many different fields ("Roads in Poland are still among the most dangerous in Europe;" "new challenges are emerging, such as climate change, unfair competition or growing protectionism in trade, with which Polish farmers cannot be left alone;" "Poland is currently a country with the most shaky and unpredictable law in the EU;" "Polish energy is in a crisis.") Likewise, the programme warns against the current government corruption and inefficiency and urges to act immediately ("we found ourselves as a civic community at a turning point;" "as it is currently happening in the pathological state - for political corruption, buying votes, enfranchisement of party activists and propaganda masking scandals in which power is involved.") The anti-elitist and anti-establishment element in KO's electoral programme is the strongest among all programmes analysed. Such tendency emerges in several key passages disseminated in the programme and stress KO's aversion against "party democracy," current authorities "building of a party state," while calling for the need to create "politically independent," "depoliticised" and

“a-political” institutions, to simplify “excessive bureaucracy” and to put an end to “privileged caste of people.” By presenting this critical and dangerous situation, the party leaders affirm their proximity to the people and their ability to understand them. They celebrate the results obtained when in power and describe themselves as those who can offer security in a rather populist approach. The category concerning inclusiveness and equality is covered by a strongly populist attitude, especially when the programme focuses on the education or health fields or on the agricultural or industrial sectors and names several different professions involved in the area. It also emerges when it comes to granting fair chances for all citizens (“for all their compatriots and subsequent generations;” “Everyone, because we are all equal citizens of one homeland, regardless of political views, religious activity, place of residence and level of wealth.”) and reducing inequality, especially referring to the differences generated by the gender gap on the workplace.

KO’ treats the people’s general will and common sense in a rather populist way as the relevance assigned to dialogue and listening to the people is stated in the programme but not considered as important as other elements. Likewise, the importance of family and society is acknowledged several times in KO’s programme (“We suggest building a country in which our children and grandchildren will want to live and start families.”), but the category does not occupy a key position in most of the issues the party discusses indicating a rather populist tendency of the party about such aspect. Although the word Polishness does not appear, there are references to the pride of Poland, its history, culture and achievements (“We will restore the image of Polish women and men being a community of people proud of their history and achievements, while cooperating closely with others;” “We will rebuild Polish cultural diplomacy.”) and the people are often referred to as “the Poles.” Therefore, such category is classified as rather populist in the way the party covered it.

Lastly, the categories of society dichotomy, people’s sovereignty, authentic representation, juxtaposition of modernity to a natural past and an ideal future, the glorification of history, solidarity, restoration and suspicion of foreign powers are slightly populist. Despite these concepts are all touched more than once in the programme and some are explored more than others, they are not central to the general message conveyed by the party nor they are framed in a populist tone.

***Konfederacja***: The society's dichotomy is the common thread of *Konfederacja*'s electoral programme. It can be perceived throughout the entire programme and is often openly stressed in a strongly populist tone ("We will not allow politicians to corrupt us with our own money from exorbitant and complicated tributes;" "It is the citizens, not the officials, who know best how to spend their own money wisely."). The emphasis on the antagonism between the two groups of the society is also evident in the way the other groups are presented. The people, described as "hardworking and enterprising," are the core of the party's interests and their good is vital ("but above all to the good of the common state and the Polish nation.") The way the antagonist is depicted is the strongest example of populism in *Konfederacja*'s programme. Politicians are corrupt and constantly fighting for power, often presented as threats along with what the party calls "LGBT propaganda" and "invasion of self-proclaimed "sex-educators" and LGBT propagandists." Building on what the party identifies as antagonists and threats, in its appeal to the people, *Konfederacja* calls for "full transparency of public expenditure", the end "of indoctrination and promotion of harmful ideologies" and the rejection of "the ideology of multiculturalism." From the latter, it follows a strongly populist approach in foreign policy that turns suspicion of foreign powers into fear and aversion. The EU is highly criticised, accused of demining national sovereignty and attacked on the migration crisis ("The current model of its functioning has failed;" "We will not allow further loss of our sovereignty to the EU;" "We opposed Poland's participation in the forced program of relocation of refugees, we reject the ideology of multiculturalism and we are opposed to the ongoing action of opening the country's borders for mass economic immigration to Poland."). The society's divide is clearly visible in the party's anti-establishment stances against the system "dominated by personal disputes and the fight over whose faction will decide to occupy the most important positions" and against the "bureaucratic corset" the party claims to end "by reducing the number of unnecessary offices and government agencies, by blocking corruption and the waste of public money for unnecessary activities and projects, as well as by eliminating particular tax concessions and privileges." People empowerment, their general will and common sense are widely promoted throughout the programme ("It is the citizens, not the officials, who know best how to spend their own money wisely.") The proximity to the people also emerges when the party leaders claim to speak "From the point of view of the problems of Poles" and often use the words "we" and "our" to present themselves as one with the people in a strongly populist way.

The last category that is classified as strongly populist is Polishness. Despite the word itself is never mentioned, the people are mostly addressed as “the Poles” to recall their belonging and pride for the nation.

The categories of family and society and inclusiveness and equality are both covered in rather populist tones. The word family does not appear in the programme, nonetheless great attention is placed on parents and children, especially rights-wise. Whereas the inclusive nature of the party emerges in *Konfederacja*’s attempt to include various social groups as it aims at “ensuring legal protection of every Pole's life, regardless of age, health or life situation.”

Little importance is assigned by *Konfederacja* in its programme to the following categories: the opposition between the good natural past and corrupt modernity, the glorification of the past, Polonia and restoration. A few references are made to such elements which, however, do not play any crucial role within the main message of the programme and are marginally covered when discussing other issues.

**Lewica:** Only two categories in *Lewica*’s programme are classified as strongly populist, namely simple and direct style of communication and inclusiveness and equality. The former because of reasons that will later be discussed, the latter because of the recurrence of terms such as “equality”, “anti-discrimination”, the attempt at including “all” and “everyone” and the emphasis placed to such aspects.

The only category treated in a rather populist way is the one representing anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiments and a-political stances. A modest aversion to politicians, propaganda and “excessive bureaucracy” emerges in the programme through expressions like “commission free of politicians;” “We depoliticize cultural institutions;” or “independent of politicians.”

All other categories covered by *Lewica*’s programme are classified as slightly populist. The society’s dichotomy is hinted twice and not emphasised. Despite the people and their rights are subject to more consideration than other categories, they are not discussed as the number one priority of the party, nor their sovereignty, general will and common sense. The construction of the antagonist is rather weak, other parties (“PO-PSL rule”) and “the current government” are addressed in two occasions only. The coalition’s leaders are not described as the only alternative and their unity with the people is stated indirectly in one sentence (“Science is for all of us - that is why we will take care of cooperation mechanisms among universities, local government and NGOs.”) The appeal to the people is not strongly populist in its nature as it mainly concerns to



providing security and no precise threat is outlined. The programme writes generally about “today’s challenges” or “challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” and explains the party’s intention to “teach about a healthy lifestyle, anti-discrimination, climate change, recognition of “fake news” and cyber security.” The protection of “forests,” “nature” and “domestic, farmed and wild animals” is discussed briefly in the programme, but no significant remarks are made in relation to the juxtaposition of the good natural past and the corrupt dangerous modernity. *Lewica*’s programme does not focus on role of family extensively; it concentrates on the topic in one paragraph where it argues that “The State must bet on family happiness” but does not understand the person in populist terms as primarily member of a group and secondly as an individual. Likewise, the category of restoration is not treated in a populist manner, and thus, in relation to a comprehensive state renewal. Lastly, suspicion of foreign powers is hardly identifiable in *Lewica*’s programme as it takes the shape of an innocuous reference to energy independence when it comes to gas. Consequently, this category is described as slightly populist, in line with the overall attitude of the party.

#### **STYLE of COMMUNICATION:**

As anticipated in the methodology, the assessment of this category requires a separate analysis to evaluate the style of communication adopted in the electoral programmes in a uniform and consistent way. This way, it is possible to evaluate the category like the others and establish if it is treated in a slightly, rather or strongly populist way. The analysis is based on the following five questions:

1. Are the people and their feelings addressed directly?
2. Is the linguistic register easy enough to be understood by everyone?
3. Are the sentences short and simple?
4. Is the tone subjective?
5. Overall, is it fluent, easy to read and clearly comprehensible in all its parts?

**PiS:** The style of communication adopted by PiS is generally simple and direct but at times rather complicated because of long and complex sentences making it less fluent. Therefore, it was classified as slightly populist. Whole sections of the programmes are intricate and use concepts not easily understandable by the average Pole. The tone is never objective, always negative when depicting the antagonist and describing its mistakes while enthusiastic when

addressing the people and presenting the party's success.

**KP:** The communication style of the programme is quite direct and fluent; it can be read easily and quickly thanks to brief paragraphs explained by short but descriptive sentences. Apart from a few technical terms, the linguistic register is in line with popular expectations: simple and clear. The tone aims to be objective but is rather negative when referring to some political parties and their reforms. Because of its simplicity and immediate understandability, KP's communication style was ranked strongly populist.

**KO:** KO's communication style is rather simple and direct. The sentences are reasonably long and can be read and understood clearly. Some sections are more specific and require careful reading and some background knowledge; nonetheless they are explained in simple terms. The non-objectivity of the tone emerges especially when KO addresses negatively its main political rival or when it refers positively to its previous term in power. All in all, the style of communication used in the programme was ranked rather populist.

***Konfederacja*:** Although the people are addressed directly in several occasions, the message is tailored for them and the party often uses simple and clear terms, the style of communication used by *Konfederacja* is rather complex. The sentences are long and rich of subordinates, while the language is at traits distant from a popular linguistic register. The tone is not objective but rather negative and aggressive when talking about other political parties. The alternation of intricate construction of sentences and more direct and easy ones produces a communication style which is not fluent and clearly comprehensible in all its parts, and thus was classified as slightly populist.

***Lewica*:** The communication style adopted in *Lewica*'s electoral programme is simple, direct and effective. Each point is addressed with very short and clear sentences employing a basic language with technical terms whenever needed. Overall, the programme is easily and immediately understandable by every Pole and its style is fresh and fluent. Therefore, it was classified as strongly populist – despite the tone is objective and detached from political struggles.

## **THE INDEX OF POPULISM (tables in appendix)**

The analysis revealed that no electoral programme presented by the political parties and coalitions included in this study ranked not populist. As reported in the index below, one programme was classified as strongly populist, one as rather populist and the remaining three as

populist. The ranking is given primarily by the number of categories included in the electoral programmes and secondly by the final score obtained summing together the values assigned to each category according to the way the category was covered in relation to populism. The combination of these two aspects produced the following index assessing the levels of populism of the electoral programmes presented in the 2019 parliamentary elections by Poland's main political parties and coalitions.

<b>Level of populism</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Categories covered</b>	<b>Final score</b>	<b>Political parties and coalitions</b>
<b>strongly populist</b> = populism as an ideology	all populism's characteristic elements are present, clearly identifiable, repeated multiple times and emphasised as the core belief of the party	20/20	58/68	<i><b>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</b></i>
<b>populist</b> = populism as a thin-centred ideology	most of populism's characteristic elements are present, they are not at the centre of the party's belief and combined with other ideologies' key-concepts	19/20 18/20 16/20	44/68 37/68 42/68	<i><b>Koalicja Polska</b></i> <i><b>Koalicja Obywatelska</b></i> <i><b>Konfederacja</b></i>
<b>rather populist</b> = populism as a strategy of political communication	only a few of populism's characteristic elements are present and are mainly used as a discourse framework to attract the electorate	13/20	18/68	<i><b>Lewica</b></i>
<b>not populist</b> = no populism	no characteristic element of Polish populism is present			

As the previous individual analysis illustrated and as the tables in appendix show in greater detail, PiS' electoral programme covered all the 20 categories approaching 13 of them in a strongly populist manner, five in a rather populist way and two in a slightly populist one. Six of the eight key-categories are framed in strongly populist tones; therefore, the programme was given six extra points and registered the highest final score of 58 points. The PiS-led coalition is the only that relied on populism as an ideology, and thus, was its programme was classified as

*strongly populist*. Covering 19 categories, of which nine were classified as strongly populist, four as rather populist and six as hardly populist for a final score equal to 44 points, KP's electoral programme ranked *populist*. Nonetheless, only three out of the eight key-categories of populism were discussed in a strongly populist way in the coalition's programme. The electoral programme presented by KO did not cover two categories. Of the 18 remaining categories it covered, five (of which four are populism's key-categories) were classified as strongly populist, five as rather populist and eight as slightly populist registering 37 points. Consequently, KO's programme was assessed as *populist*. Despite *Konfederacja*'s electoral programme included 16 categories, it still ranked *populist* due to the way the categories it covered were treated throughout the programme. Five categories were classified as slightly populist, two as rather populist and nine as strongly populist. Because six of the nine strongly populist categories are key categories of populism, the final score reached 42 points. KP, KO and *Konfederacja* relied on populism as a thin-centred ideology; therefore, they were classified as populist. The only *rather populist* electoral programme in the 2019 parliamentary election is the one presented by *Lewica* that used populism as a strategy of political communication. The programme covered 13 categories and registered 18 points as final score. Only two categories were classified as strongly populist, one as rather and all the others covered by the programme were slightly treated in a populist manner.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Before answering the research question, it is worth acknowledging that the initial presumption was confirmed only partially. As assumed before in this work and demonstrated later by the analysis, none of the electoral programmes examined presented no traces of populism at all. In line with the presumption, the analysis confirmed PiS and *Lewica*'s programme as the most and the least populist coalitions included in the study. However, the results related to the three other political parties and coalitions differed from those foreseen originally. *Konfederacja* was expected to rank as the second most populist party followed by KO and KP. Contrary to the presumption, the findings indicated a change in the hypothetical ranking's order whose central positions were occupied by KP, KO and *Konfederacja*.

### ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Finally, to answer the research question "how much populist are the main political parties in contemporary Poland?" it can be stated that no main Polish political party is completely distant from populism. To a certain extent, all five parties included in this study contain in their electoral programmes some of the characteristic elements defining Polish populism. The index here introduced showed different degrees of populism and ranked political parties and coalitions as follows: PiS is a strongly populist coalition, it used populism as an ideology in its programme which covered all the 20 categories and registered a final score of 58 points. KP, KO and *Konfederacja* are populist parties that treated populism as a thin-centred ideology. Their electoral programmes comprised 19, 18 and 16 of the total 20 categories, for a final score of 44, 37 and 42 points respectively. *Lewica* is a rather populist coalition that relied on populism as a strategy of political communication and whose programme included 13 categories reaching a final score of 18 points.

The two following paragraphs are devoted to the discussion of the results coming from the analysis. The first section concentrates on the general findings and discusses the reasons behind the high levels of populism registered in the main political parties and coalitions of today's Poland. The second focuses on the key categories of Polish populism and on the meanings assigned by the parties and coalitions to such crucial indicators.

One last premise must be made, about two aspects that cannot be forgotten when discussing the results of this analysis. First, the primary sources used in this study are the official electoral

programmes and as such they tend by nature to display populist tones. Second, since 2015, PiS has been dominating Poland's political scene and dictating its language, and thus, it has largely influenced the common discourse.

## **DISCUSSING THE GENERAL FINDINGS**

The analysis revealed a relatively populist political scene in contemporary Poland, where remarkable levels of populism were registered in four of the country's five main political parties and coalitions. These high levels of populism in Poland can be explained by some of the reasons that favoured the initial surge of the phenomenon in the late 80s and early 90s such as insufficient institutionalisation of the party system, scarce representation, people's discontent and distrust and call for a change on which populist leaders expertly built up their discourses. However, if the populist tendencies of the coalitions led by Kaczyński and Kowrin-Mikke are already known and discussed widely in academia – they are commonly labelled as Poland's populist parties – what surprised the most are the results of the two other coalitions, namely KP and KO. KP ranked populist because it included in its programme all categories but one and many of them were classified as strongly populist according to the way they were covered. It is worth noting that the main parties that founded the coalition in July 2019 were PSL and Kukiz'15 and that the coalition's chair is Paweł Kukiz, punk-rock musician and man of the people. Before in this work, K'15 was presented among the examples of populism in Poland and the party's populist influence has definitely played an important role in shaping the ideology professed by the coalition. KP's ideology is described as centrist, Christian democratic, agrarian and pro-European; however, as this analysis showed, it bears several populist connotations. Similarly, KO's programme is significantly populist when discussing some of the characteristic elements but not most of them. Therefore, it cannot be defined a strongly populist coalition but a populist one, despite its programme comprised a consistent number of categories. KP but mostly KO's results indicate that populism is not a prerogative of conservative or authoritarian right-wing parties or coalitions only, but it is becoming a feature shared by others too. Such trend reflects the overall rise of populism occurring nowadays not only in Poland or in the Central and East European region but in many other countries around Europe and the whole world. As TIMBRO claims in its latest report "In recent years, populist voter support has been turned into unprecedented levels of political power and influence. Today, populist parties are part of every third European government. Four member states of the EU – Poland, Hungary, Italy, and Greece

– have governments solely formed by populist parties.” (TIMBRO, 2019) Therefore, one of the reasons behind this shift to populism of parties and coalitions generally not understood as populist can be explained by their necessity of staying competitive. In order to maintain their position in the country’s political scene, not traditionally populist parties started adopting the same tactics applied by the leading ones and begun adapting to the evolving situation. Therefore, more and more parties formed coalitions with unexpected political partners or changed the core of their areas of interests and adopted new ideologies. The observation of KP and KO’s electoral programmes showed clearly that their approaches tend to display more and more proximity to the people by valuing their rights and well-being and outlining how central all citizens are in almost every issue they discuss. The populist approach in their programmes also emerged in the many, direct or indirect, references to the dichotomy of the society and in the intense anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiments used to depict the dangerous antagonist in contrast to the good citizens. Instead of widely focusing on how to address current dangerous or critical situations and propose solutions, both coalitions in their programmes opted for describing the flaws of the current system and the many threats to the Polish society and nation. They intensified the sense of insecurity and introduced themselves as the people’s only source of safety and stability. The main aim of their programmes was attracting voters; thus, they placed the people in the centre of their interests and presented citizen-friendly proposals along with pro-social reforms valuing first and foremost the people’s rights and needs looking at their future. It should be noted that in this regard, KO and KP adopted an understanding of the individual close to PiS and *Konfederacja*’s one. In the narrative of the two latter coalitions, the individual is perceived primarily as the member of a larger group – family, society, nation. This is also visible in their understanding of the nation “as a collective unit, rather than as a collection of individuals.” (European Commission, 2019: 86) In such a populist interpretation, it follows that the rights and liberties of single citizens are submitted to those of the society at large. An analogous attitude was recognised in KP and KO’s programmes where the individuals are accorded major importance primarily in relation to family and society which are a central aspect in both their discourses. The parties’ effort to build proximity to the people and strengthen such connection can be detected in the style of political communication and linguistic register they adopted in their electoral programmes. A simple and direct style of political communication is a clear indicator of populism and such characteristic element must be considered because of its power to reveal a

party's intentions. In the cases of KO and KP, it can be observed that their discourses were adapted to convey closeness to the people that would support their appeals to them. However, KO's style of communication is not totally simple and direct, as it presents some longer sentences and slightly sophisticated comments at times. The simplicity, directness and immediateness typical of populist discourse can be found more easily in KP's electoral programme. In fact, the coalition's style of political communication is immediately and clearly understandable as the sentences are short and straightforward and the linguistic register used is simple and close to the popular one. Paradoxically among the electoral programmes examined, *Lewica*'s communication style is the most fluent, it emphasises the coalition's newness and freshness in the political party system. Its programme is the simplest, it uses short and clear sentences directly addressing the core of the topic, many different topics are discussed briefly keeping the readers' attention high. Contrary to a typically populist style of political communication, PiS and *Konfederacja*'s electoral programmes are not always easy to read nor are they fluent in all their length. They include long discursive paragraphs and, at times, express intricate concepts through long and complicated sentences. Lastly, all political parties and coalitions but *Lewica* did not only use their electoral programmes to present their ideals and to outline the key-points of their political strategies. They mostly used the programmes to build their own narratives by commenting negatively on the political opponents and criticising their choices and reforms which led to the current situation. Four out of the five electoral programmes analysed spent many words in the attempt to exacerbate the antagonism between the two groups of the society, undermine their opponents, appeal to the people and present themselves as one with the good, hard-working Poles. Although in their electoral programmes, parties and coalitions addressed several various issues, most of them corresponded to characteristic elements of Polish populism and were usually covered in a rather or stronger populist manner.

To conclude on this, most of the electoral programmes examined included concepts and topics typical of populism and their core messages were as well framed in populist tones. To a different extent, the parties and coalitions' electoral programmes re-affirmed their populist attitudes even through their styles of political communication by addressing the people and their feelings in a direct and simple discourse that everyone can easily understand. All this confirmed today's growing tendency to shift to populism as a means to keep up with the political opponents, and thus, as a means of survival in the electoral competition for office.



## DISCUSSING THE KEY CATEGORIES

This section discusses what can be deduced when observing the results concerning the key categories of Polish populism only.

As explained in the methodology, eight characteristic elements are key to identify the populist phenomenon and its Polish variant in real-life cases, and thus, the electoral programmes were assigned an extra point for each key category they covered in a strongly populist manner. These key categories are the society dichotomy, the central role of the people, the construction of the antagonist, the anti-elitist/-establishment sentiments, Polishness, the Roman Catholic Church and Polonia. Such categories are considered the most significant indicators of populism for several reasons. All characteristic elements of populism described in this work's conceptualisation are deduced from the study of the most popular definitions and analysis of populism in academia. As observed before in this study, the five key categories correspond to the most important characteristic elements stressed in every conceptualisation of populism and they are described by all scholars as the basis of the phenomenon. (Canovan, Taggart, Mudde, Kriesi, etc.) As for the other three key categories, they are the most significant traits of populism in its Polish variation because since the surge of the phenomenon in the country and throughout its development, they are the most recognisable defining features of Polish populism and were also assigned key relevance in previous literature. (Wysocka, Stanley and Czesńnik) More in detail, the role of the Roman Catholic Church was included in the key characteristic elements of Polish populism because it "has played an outsized role ever since the end of communism in 1989, with both parties of the left and right accommodating its demands, ranging from teaching religion in public schools to limiting access to abortion and birth control." (Wanat, 2019) As described before in this work, Lech Wałęsa often outlined the importance of Christianity in his appeals to the people and used Christian symbols like the Black Madonna of Częstochowa – "the madonna's image was never absent from Lech Walesa's lapel during the Solidarity leader's struggle against Poland's Communist regime." (Menaker, 1990) Later, the Catholic Church entered the discourse of Polish populists as other cases demonstrate, such as the League of Polish Families (LPR), the "ultra Catholic radio station, *Radio Maryja*" and more recently in the case of ZP. (Wysocka, 2009: 7) Polishness, the second key category of Polish populism, was included because it became an important point stressed by conservative right-wing parties in their discourses in connection to national identity and patriotism. However, in a different way this characteristic

element is also used by other parties to show their pride of the nation, and thus, it became a popular and central aspect in the narrative of Polish populists. Lastly, Polonia is a key category of Polish populism because, similarly to the other two key elements, it was part of the populist discourse typical of the country since the first cases in the 1990s – Stan Tyminski himself was the member of one of the many Polish communities living abroad. The concept grew to represent the inclusive nature of Polish populists in connection to other characteristic elements like family and society, history and Polishness.

Before discussing the results of the key categories it must be acknowledged that focusing only on the most important indicators of Polish populism would not provide a clear and complete picture of the phenomenon and the shapes it can take according to the way a party or coalition uses the concept of populism. Despite the central role of the key categories being crucial indicators, the phenomenon is more complex than that and it includes other elements that cannot be underestimated nor excluded from the analysis. Isolating the key categories and focusing on their meaning can give an insight into the phenomenon and help understanding the overall values assigned to the categories. However, the influence of other elements must not be ignored as they describe different nuances of parties and coalitions' tendencies and it allows to better comprehend their core areas of interest and their relation to other ideologies. For instance, some of the characteristic elements represented by non-key categories (like general will, the opposition between corrupt modernity and the good old past, restoration) are typical of the populist phenomenon only even though they are not the substantial features on which populism can stand and grow. Their presence in the electoral programmes and the importance assigned by parties or coalitions to these non-key categories allows to determine if they are relying on populism as a thin-centred ideology or as an ideology *per sé*, and thus, to classify them as populist or strongly populist according to their adherence to the concept. Whereas others non-key categories (like the glorification of the past or inclusiveness and equality) do not belong to the populist phenomenon exclusively, they can be combined with other concepts or found in other ideologies. In these cases, they describe a more subtle or indirect connection to populism which is used by a party or a coalition as a framework to their discourses.

To wrap up, recognising the key categories of Polish populism and discerning them from the non-key categories helps to elaborate more in-depth considerations. However, the key categories are not the only characteristic elements of Polish populism and the non-key categories cannot be

excluded from the analysis. Underestimating some of the indicators would interfere with a full understanding of the phenomenon in all its nuances.

When considering only the extra points assigned to the electoral programmes for covering the key categories of populism and Polish populism in a strongly populist manner, it can be observed that the ranking would look more similar to the one presented in the presumption. In fact, PiS and *Konfederacja* would both be given six points, KO four, KP three and Lewica none.

Looking at the analysis it emerges that the key category of society dichotomy was covered in a strongly populist manner by *Konfederacja* only, while PiS and KP approached it in a rather populist tone and KO and *Lewica* in a slightly populist one. Such an element clearly indicates the direction that a party would take and in the case of *Konfederacja* it was an important statement. The dichotomy of the society was the common thread of its electoral programme and the underlying factor in the way every other key category of populism was discussed. Among the three key categories of Polish populism, *Konfederacja* covered Polishness in a strongly populist way and not the Catholic Church and Polonia. This might indicate that the core interest of the party are the Poles currently living in Poland while the communities living abroad or Polish diasporans are not a significant component of the programme's target audience. Such a choice is also in line with the conservative, far-right and nationalist tendencies of the party leader Korwin-Mikke. As for the Catholic Church, it is worth noting that nor *Konfederacja* nor the other coalitions mentioned it in their electoral programmes, but only the coalition led by PiS did.

PiS' programme was the only that treated this key category of Polish populism and did it in a strongly populist manner. The reason behind these choices can be found in the desire of the other parties and coalitions of remaining neutral on religious topics and not risking losing the support of non-religious voters. It is worth mentioning the case of *Lewica* which took a completely negative stance against the Church and its privileges in its programme. However, a remarkable part of PiS' electorate belongs to the Catholic Church and "(...) while all previous governments had close relations with the church, under PiS the ties verge on the symbiotic." (Wanat, 2019) Therefore, PiS was not afraid of promoting the role of religion in Poland, showing its proximity to the Church or quoting Pope Francis and Pope John Paul II in more than one occasion. Similarly, PiS' electoral programme was the only that covered Polonia in a strongly populist manner. The coalition highly values the Polish communities living abroad and Polish diasporans as part of the country's history, hence they are often mentioned throughout the programme as the

party is seeking their support in the elections. Among the eight key categories of Polish populism, PiS did not cover in a strongly populist way, but in a rather populist one, two of them, namely: society dichotomy and anti-elitist and anti-establishment. The coalition opted for focusing mostly on the appeal to the good people and the promise of carrying on with their pro-social and citizen-friendly reforms against the political opponents represented as the cause of everything that is wrong in the country. Seconding its populist nature, the PiS-led coalition built up on the masses' feelings to exaggerate the sense of insecurity and create fear, and to magnify discontent to direct hatred against the others. This would help the coalition to consolidate the support gained in 2015 and to attract new voters. Treating Polishness in a strongly populist way also served PiS' tactics of enlarging its electorate because it reinforced the sense of belonging to the country and pride for the nation along with the promise of protecting national identity and the values on which the country was built. The key of the coalition's electoral programme was the construction of the antagonist to which it dedicated a whole chapter: "Diagnosis. From post-Communism to the Polish model of the modern welfare state" (*Diagnoza. Od postkomunizmu do polskiego modelu nowoczesnego państwa dobrobytu*). The chapter narrated the evolution of the Polish state after the collapse of communism and described the new system ("late post-communism") as a pathology, which explains the use of the term diagnosis. The construction of the antagonist, depicted as the source of all evil to be blamed for anything wrong in the country, was framed in highly negative tones addressing the people's guts directly. By building such narrative, PiS enhanced the people's hate and discontent and exploited their feelings to mobilise them against its political opponents.

KO and KP did not cover the society dichotomy or the three key categories of Polish populism in a strongly populist way. Nonetheless, the dichotomy of the society was expressed less directly in their electoral programmes by the central role attributed to the people in contrast to the evil antagonist and other dangers threatening the society. As explained earlier in this chapter, both coalitions aimed at reaching out to the people through their electoral programme and showing a renewed proximity to the Poles in order to mobilise them and gain their support. Consequently, KO and KP covered the key categories of the people and the appeal to them in a strongly populist way. As for the construction of the antagonist, KP adopted a rather populist approach, whereas KO followed a strongly populist line and focused on an accurate depiction of the people's enemy, the coalition's main political rival PiS. This highly populist attitude can be

explained by the PO-PiS divide and the years-long antagonism between the two coalitions. KO, and PO before, had often been the subject of PiS' allegations, such as those followed the 2010 Smoleńsk disaster when "Jarosław Kaczyński and Law and Justice accused Civic Platform and their leader and then Prime Minister Donald Tusk of treason," or like the attacks against Tusk's government after the 2014 tapping scandal. (Jaskiernia, 2017: 233) Therefore, expecting to find the renewal of such criticism in the electoral programmes of its political opponent, KO might have opted for a similar hard line. Unlike PiS and *Lewica*, both KO and KP also covered in strongly populist tones the anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiments' category. The critique to the current system, the elite and the establishment was functional to their appeals to intensify the people's sense of distrust, discontent and insecurity and mobilise them to join more moderate stances and mobilise against the current leaders. Moving to the key categories of the Polish variation of populism, it can be observed that the two coalitions did not show any interests in the key category describing the special ties of Poland with the Catholic Church and only KP showed very little interest in the key category of Polonia. As for the former, it was already suggested that parties and coalitions generally tend to remain neutral on such themes because expressing support or rejection for religion or the Roman Catholic Church might lead to losing votes or because it is considered useless as, in the Polish case, the Catholic electorate generally votes for PiS. As for the latter, both coalitions did not engage notably or at all discussing Polonia trying to gain the votes of Polish communities living abroad because they are a consistent part of PiS' electorate. The two coalitions also did not look at Polishness as a central feature of their electoral programmes. A potential explanation might be the close connection between Polishness and patriotism which can make KO and KP look like nationalist coalitions if they emphasised national identity and Polishness to extreme levels. However, such category was still classified as rather populist in KO's electoral programme and the reason behind this can again be found in the PO-PiS divide and the ongoing rivalry between them pushing KO to change its previous stances and to adopt more populist tones.

The way Poland's main political parties and coalitions covered the key categories in their electoral programmes opened for more precise observations regarding their relationship with populism and revealed significant aspects of their political natures and strategies. Although the eight key categories correspond to the most important indicators of populism and its Polish variant, the other 12 not crucial categories cannot be ignored. Considering the key categories

only would provide a different ranking order closer to the expected one, but such an index would not be complete, and thus, not correct. All the characteristic elements of populism and Polish populism must be considered, evaluated and examined in perspective in order to provide valid and reliable results. A comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in the context of contemporary Poland's party system can be achieved only if all indicators are considered in connection to each other.

## CONCLUSIONS and FURTHER STUDIES

The main idea behind this dissertation was to explore populism in today's Poland to answer the following research question: how much populist are the main political parties and coalitions in contemporary Poland?

First, it was necessary to define the populist phenomenon which in this work is understood as a concept that can acquire three different shapes – ideology, thin-centred ideology, strategy of political communication – based on the frequency and the use of its characteristic elements. The Polish variation of populism also needed defining. Therefore, the development of Poland's political scenario and its party system are investigated to understand the origins and peculiarities of the phenomenon in the country, and thus, to elaborate on the characteristic elements typical of Polish populism.

Secondly, it was necessary to select the main political parties and coalitions and establish the primary sources for data collection. The electoral programmes of the parties and coalitions that reached the threshold in the 2019 parliamentary election were chosen for the analysis. The programmes were searched to detect units of meaning indicating the presence of populism. The units were individually analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, they were evaluated and assigned to a category corresponding to one of the characteristic elements of Polish populism. The categories were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, and each of them was assigned an overall value. The electoral programmes were then assigned a final score resulting from the sum of each category's overall value. According to first, how many categories were covered in the electoral programmes and, second, to the final score of each programme, it was finally possible to allocate political parties and coalitions in an index of populism. Modelled on the conceptualisation of populism adopted by this study, the index consists of four levels – strongly populist, populist, slightly populist, not populist – each describing a different use of populism – as an ideology, a thin-centred ideology, a strategy of political communication.

As anticipated, the analysis partially confirmed the initial presumption. Not surprisingly, no political party or coalition was free of populism, PiS was classified as strongly populist and *Lewica* as slightly populist. The other three ranked populist, but unexpectedly the second place was awarded to KP, the third to KO and the fourth to *Konfederacja*. Generally, remarkable levels of populism were found in four out five parties and coalitions included in the study.

Looking at the findings, the contemporary political scene in Poland reflects a much broader fashion of shifting to populism. Political parties and coalitions traditionally not considered populist are more and more relying on populism as a thin-centred ideology (KP, KO, *Konfederacja*) or as a strategy of political communication (*Lewica*). This is explained by the exigence of staying on the public political scene and competing for office against populist parties. Therefore, these parties are adapting to the current trend, forming unforeseen coalitions, treating typically populist topics as central in their electoral programmes and framing their discourses in populist tones and styles. Populism has become the key for political survival.

The conceptualisation provided in this study showed that populism can be observed and measured in real-life cases. If adequately adjusted to a different context, this conceptualisation can be applied to investigate the phenomenon in other countries and situations, and so, it can enrich the knowledge on concrete examples of populism. Whereas, staying in the Polish context, this work's conceptualisation and methodology can be used to analyse past electoral programmes, or other textual materials, and examine them in contrast to more recent ones. The data can then be combined in a comparative study on the development of populism in Poland through time. In both cases, this work can serve as a basis to further researches.





## APPENDIX

<b>1991 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Democratic Union	12.3%
Democratic Left Alliance	11.99%
Catholic Electoral Action	8.74%
Centre Civic Alliance/Citizens' Centre Accord	8.71%
Polish People's Party Program Alliance	8.67%
Confederation of Independent Poland	7.50%
Liberal Democratic Congress	7.49%
Peasants' Agreement/People's Movement People's Accord	5.47%
Homeland Commission NSZ Solidarity	5.05%
<b>1993 Parliamentary Election</b> (5% threshold is introduced)	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Democratic Left Alliance	20.41%
Polish People's Party Program Alliance	15.40%
Democratic Union	10.59%
Labour Union	7.28%
Catholic Electoral Committee/Fatherland	6.37%
Confederation Independent Poland	5.77%
Non-party Bloc for Support of the Reforms	5.41%
<b>1997 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Electoral Solidarity Action	33.83%
Democratic Left Alliance	27.13%
Freedom Union	13.37%
Polish People's Party	7.31%
Movement for Rebuilding Poland	5.56%
<b>2001 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Coalition Democratic Left Alliance – Labour Union	41.04%
<i>Civic Platform</i> (Voters' Civil Platform of the Republic of Poland)	12.68%
Self-Defence of Republic of Poland	10.20%
<i>Law and Justice</i>	9.50%
Polish People's Party	8.98%
<i>League of Polish Families</i>	7.87%
Solidarity Electoral Action	5.60%
<b>2005 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Law and Justice	26.99%
Civic Platform (Voters' Civil Platform of the Republic of Poland)	24.14%
Self-Defence of Republic of Poland	11.41%
Coalition Democratic Left Alliance – Labour Union	11.31%

League of Polish Families	7.97%
Polish People's Party	6.96%
<b>2007 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Civic Platform (Voters' Civil Platform of the Republic of Poland)	41.51%
Law and Justice	32.11%
Coalition of Left and Democrats	13.15%
Polish People's Party	8.91%
<b>2011 Parliamentary Election</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEJM (%)</b>
Civic Platform	39.18%
Law and Justice	29.89%
<i>Palikot Movement</i>	10.02%
Polish People's Party	8.36%
Democratic Left Alliance	8.24%

Source: "European Election Database - Parliamentary elections in Poland," n.d.

<b>2015 Parliamentary Election</b>			
	<b>SEJM</b>		<b>SENAT</b>
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>VOTES %</b>	<b>SEATS</b>	<b>SEATS</b>
Law and Justice	37.58%	235	61
Civic Platform	24.09%	138	34
<i>Kukiz'15</i>	8.81%	42	NQ
<i>Modern</i>	7.60%	28	NQ
United Left	7.55%	NQ	NQ
Polish People's Party	5.13%	16	1
<i>Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic of Liberty and Hope</i>	4.76%	NQ	NQ
<i>Together</i>	3.62%	NQ	NQ
German Minority	0.18%	1	NQ
Others	0.68%		

Source: Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza (2015)  
 "PKW | Wybory do Sejmu RP i Senatu RP," n.d., and "PKW | Wybory do Sejmu RP i Senatu RP," n.d.-b

<b>2019 Parliamentary Election</b>				
	<b>SEJM</b>		<b>SENAT</b>	
<b>PARTY</b>	<b>VOTES %</b>	<b>SEATS</b>	<b>VOTES %</b>	<b>SEATS</b>
United Right	43.59%	235	44,56%	48
Civic Coalition	27.40%	134	35.66%	43
The Left	12.56%	49	2.28%	2
Polish Coalition	8.55%	30	5.72%	3
Confederation	6.81%	11		
German Minority	0.17%	1		

Source: Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza (2019)

"Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2019 r.," n.d. and "Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2019 r.," n.d.-b

Total values of units of meaning per category

	<b>Electoral programmes of the political parties and coalitions</b>				
<b>Characteristic elements of Polish populism</b>	<b>PiS</b>	<b>KO</b>	<b>KP</b>	<b>Lewica</b>	<b>Konfederacja</b>
<i>Society dichotomy</i>	23	15	14	2	15
<i>Central role of the people</i>	263	150	45	12	22
<i>Construction of the antagonist</i>	308	134	20	9	37
<i>Appeal to the people instilling insecurity and urging for action</i>	174	175	38	17	26
Populist leaders	129	80	30	2	16
<i>Anti-elitist/ establishment + a-political</i>	36	91	31	21	22
People's sovereignty	6	9	16		
People's general will and common sense	78	62	48	4	17
Authentic representation	32	16	4		
Natural past v. corrupting modernity + future like a better past	58	24	20	19	3
Glorification of the past	142	16	5		6
<i>Polishness</i>	328	100	7		14
<i>Catholic Church</i>	59				
Family and society	334	101	41	7	12
Solidarity	80	6	4		
Inclusiveness and equality	441	313	182	63	16
Restoration	56	35	8	5	2
<i>Polonia</i>	35		3		2
Suspicion v. foreign powers	89	6	26	2	28

Overall values of the categories (from one to three + one extra point when a key category is assigned three points)

	<b>Electoral programmes of the political parties and coalitions</b>				
<b>Characteristic elements of Polish populism</b>	<b>PiS</b>	<b>KO</b>	<b>KP</b>	<b>Lewica</b>	<b>Konfederacja</b>
<i>Society dichotomy</i>	2	1	2	1	3 + 1
<i>Central role of the people</i>	3 + 1	3 + 1	3 + 1	1	3 + 1
<i>Construction of the antagonist</i>	3 + 1	3 + 1	2	1	3 + 1
<i>Appeal to the people instilling insecurity and urging for action</i>	3 + 1	3 + 1	3 + 1	1	3 + 1
Populist leaders	3	2	2	1	3
<i>Anti-elitist/ establishment + a-political</i>	2	3 + 1	3 + 1	2	3 + 1
People's sovereignty	1	1	3		
People's general will and common sense	3	2	3	1	3
Authentic representation	2	1	1		
Natural past v. corrupting modernity + future like a better past	2	1	3	1	1
<b>Simple and direct communication style</b>	1	2	3	3	1
Glorification of the past	3	1	1		1
<i>Polishness</i>	3 + 1	2	1		3 + 1
<i>Catholic Church</i>	3 + 1				
Family and society	3	2	3	1	2
Solidarity	3	1	1		1
Inclusiveness and equality	3	3	3	3	2
Restoration	3	1	1	1	1
<i>Polonia</i>	3 + 1		1		1

Suspicion v. foreign powers	3	1	2	1	3
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